

'Bush may replace Sununu'

LOS ANGELES (R) — President George Bush is considering a White House shake-up that would include replacing John Sununu as chief of staff in an effort to fight a drop in his popularity and growing discontent within his Republican Party, the Los Angeles Times said Saturday. In a report from Washington, the newspaper, quoting unidentified sources, said several Bush advisers say they expect the changes before the end of the year, perhaps as early as next week. Although Mr. Bush has continued to publicly voice support for Mr. Sununu, behind-the-scenes pressure to replace him has come from cabinet members, other presidential advisers and key Republicans in Congress, the newspaper said. The abrasive chief of staff's prickly ways have landed him in almost constant hot water since Mr. Bush chose the former New Hampshire governor for the job after he engineered the president's come-from-behind victory in the state's pivotal 1988 primary election. In April news reports said Mr. Sununu was using a military jet costing \$3,495 an hour for personal trips as well as official business. He used air force planes for more than 60 personal or political trips in two years.

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Cabinet approves amendments

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet, in a meeting Saturday under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, approved an amendment to the Unified Allowance System which applies for civil and military personnel. According to the amendment, employees of all classes will be entitled to a JD 10 allowance as of Jan. 1, 1992. The Cabinet approved an amendment to the rising costs of living regulations which applies to retired army personnel. In addition, the Cabinet approved a draft amendment to the Amman Financial Market (AFM) law. The amendment posits that the AFM's expenses and assets be monitored by the Audit Bureau.

Iran releases Iraqi of German origin

NICOSIA (R) — Iran released an Iraqi prisoner-of-war of German origin Saturday at the request of the German government, the Iranian news agency IRNA said. The prisoner, captured during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980 to 1988, was handed to the German embassy in Tehran, it added. The agency did not name him. It quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying Iran had set him free in recognition of German assistance to Iraqi refugees who fled to Iran after the Gulf war earlier this year. International agencies say Iran is still holding some 30,000 Iraqi prisoners from the war.

Kazakhstan prepares for first election

ALMA ATA, Soviet Union (R) — The ethnically diverse Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan holds its first presidential election Sunday, a vote designed to strengthen the hand of current leader Nursultan Nazarbayev. Mr. Nazarbayev, who recently gained a 90 per cent favourable rating in a local opinion poll, is the only candidate and is expected to win overwhelming approval for his performance as he pushes through far-reaching economic reform. Mr. Kazakhstan and Russia are the only two of the 12 Soviet republics not to have declared independence since a failed Kremlin coup in August. Kazakhstan wants independent status within a Soviet confederation.

Problem sends shuttle home early

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (R) — The space shuttle Atlantis will return to earth four days early because one of three navigating units aboard had failed, Space Agency officials said Saturday. Landing was set for Sunday at Edwards Air Force Base in California, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration said. Atlantis was launched on Nov. 24 on what was to have been a 10-day mission for the Defence Department.

3 killed in Ethiopian clashes

ADDIS ABABA (R) — Three people were killed in clashes between security forces and high school students in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, state television reported on Friday night. It said the deaths occurred earlier Friday when security officers were trying to halt violence instigated by "anti-democracy and anti-peace" students from two schools. It did not say whether those killed were students or security forces. The television said the students had been destroying school property, creating unrest and disrupting classes. It was not clear whether the unrest was politically motivated.

Algeria hunts gunmen

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian troops are reported to have cut off two eastern desert towns in a hunt for marauding gunmen, turbaned like Afghan guerrillas. The troops Saturday surrounded the two settlements near the Tunisian frontier seeking the killers of three border guards in a pre-dawn attack on Friday, an Algerian radio said. The raid was launched amid an alert for armed Islamic extremists.

U.S. awaits Israeli word on peace talks

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States has not heard anything new from Israel about whether Israeli negotiators will show up for next week's Middle East peace talks in Washington, the U.S. State Department said Saturday. President George Bush wants the talks to begin on Dec. 4. Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians have all accepted that date but Israel wants to wait until Dec. 9.

"I don't know who's going to show on Dec. 4, but we're going to get the talks going," Mr. Bush said Friday. The first round of the talks was held in Madrid from Oct. 30 to Nov. 3. Israel's ambassador to Washington, Zalman Shoval, met on Friday with State Department officials and then told reporters that Israel was going to look at all possible suggestions, adding: "We have never said the date was the main issue. We have always said the main issues was direct communication."

A State Department spokesman said nothing more was expected from Israel until after the Israeli cabinet holds its weekly meeting Sunday.

In Tel Aviv, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Friday that Israel would consider sending a low-level advance team to the Washington talks on Dec. 4 if "someone" — apparently the U.S. hosts — proposed the idea. "Discussions are continuing in

Washington, and if something new turns up, something new may happen here also," Mr. Shamir said.

After meeting U.S. officials at the State Department, Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval told reporters in Washington it was time for the Americans to stop mediating and for Arabs to talk directly to Israel about dates and venues.

Israeli sources told Reuters that if an understanding could be reached that dates and venues for future talks would be negotiated directly between Israel and the Arabs the second round of talks could go forward on Dec. 4.

"There might be some way of compromising on the date as well as on the venue of coming here to Washington if the main principle of direct bilateral negotiations is not undermined," one Israeli source said.

Israel has been isolated over its demands for a delay in resuming the historic talks. Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians have already said they would show up in Washington next Wednesday whether Israel did or not.

Israel's bilateral negotiations are with Syria, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

The United States and its Soviet co-sponsors of the talks were forced to call the session for

Dec. 4 in Washington after Israel and the Arabs were unable to agree.

Israel, angry at not winning U.S. backing for its demand that peace talks be held in the Middle East, said this week it would not resume negotiations until Dec. 9.

Mr. Shamir said Israel so far had no intention of amending its demand for a five-day delay, but he acknowledged the issue might be raised at a weekly cabinet meeting Sunday.

Israeli media reported that several ministers planned to propose that Israel save face by having a low-level team in Washington before a full negotiating delegation arrives for Dec. 9.

The Palestinians have urged the United States to pressure Israel to attend.

Mr. Shamir said he thought a collapse of the peace process was unlikely but said "we are taking into account" a possible public relations fiasco conjured by the prospect of Arab delegations facing empty Israeli chairs.

Israeli leaders indicated that the Jewish state's troubled relations with the United States were at the heart of the deadlock in the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Shamir said American pressure on Israel had caused the Arabs to think they could bypass direct talks and rely on American pressure to get the Jewish state to make concessions.

Ukraine move is not split, Gorbachev tells Bush

MOSCOW (R) — Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev told U.S. President George Bush Saturday that a "Yes" vote in the Ukraine's referendum on independence did not mean the republic was making a break from Moscow.

"We will not view a decision of the citizens of the Ukraine in favour of independence as a break from the union," Mr. Gorbachev told Mr. Bush during a telephone conversation. "To push matters in this direction would mean heading for disaster — for the union, for the Ukraine itself, for Russia, for Europe and the world."

Mr. Gorbachev, whose comments during the 45-minute conversation were reported by TASS news agency, expressed concern this week at reports that Mr. Bush was prepared to recognise Ukrainian independence.

Mr. Bush, under pressure from influential Ukrainian-American groups to extend recognition, said Friday there would be no major break with Mr. Gorbachev even if the republic, as expected, voted Sunday for secession.

TASS said Mr. Bush, who telephoned the Kremlin leader, had adopted a "measured, well thought out approach" to developments in the Soviet republics, including the relations with Moscow.

U.N. council will not ease Iraq sanctions during review

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The Security Council will almost certainly do nothing to ease its sanctions against Iraq next week when it holds a periodic review of the mandatory curbs against Baghdad, according to council members.

"Nothing warrants changes," Soviet representative Yuli Vorontsov, who will take over the presidency of the council on Dec. 1, told Reuters.

Western council members also ruled out any easing of the sanctions, imposed shortly after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Under an omnibus resolution adopted on April 3 calling for the scrapping of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, imposing reparations and a range of other measures, the council is obliged to review the sanctions every 60 days but has done nothing so far to modify them.

The next review is due Monday. Mr. Vorontsov, who will be responsible for the council's work

Washington intended to develop with them.

"He said the U.S. wanted relations that would not harm the republic's efforts in solving questions linked to the future (Soviet) Union," TASS said.

"The president of the United States wished Mikhail Gorbachev every success in this most difficult task," TASS said.

In an interview published earlier Saturday, Mr. Gorbachev urged the Ukraine to remain within the Soviet Union and rejected the suggestion that Russia could claim some of the vast republic's territory.

In Kiev, Leonid Kravchuk, likely winner of the Ukrainian presidential election held in conjunction with the referendum, accused Mr. Gorbachev of interfering in the campaign.

He told television viewers in a broadcast calling for a "Yes" vote that even the president of the former Soviet Union had no right to interfere with the Ukrainian people's decision.

"Centrist forces" opposed to independence, he said, were trying to hang on to power to defend their own interests. All six presidential candidates favour independence and say this means a complete political break with Moscow.

U.N. council will not ease Iraq sanctions during review

schedule during December, told Reuters the review might be delayed for a day or two for logistical reasons.

The council adopted resolutions in August and September allowing Iraq to export up to \$1.6 billion worth of its embargoed oil over a six-month period, with the proceeds to be paid into a U.N. escrow account to enable Baghdad to buy food and other civilian necessities and to begin making payments into a war reparations fund.

The United Nations would closely monitor the oil sales and the distribution of humanitarian supplies inside Iraq to ensure there was no illicit diversion.

Baghdad has so far refused to sell oil under those terms, which it regards as an infringement of its sovereignty.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said in a speech in Scarborough, England, Friday that U.N. sanctions against Iraq must remain in place as long as Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is in power.



Sharif Zeid pledges to uphold equal status for men and women

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Saturday pledged that his government would ensure that men and women are given equal treatment in the eyes of the law in Jordan.

The pledge came during a visit Sharif Zeid paid to the Court of Cassation and the Higher Court of Justice where he met with Abdul Karim Maath, head of the Court of Cassation, and Rifat Shmumut, head of the Higher Court of Justice, to discuss issues concerning their courts.

At the meeting, which was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Thouban Hindawi and Minister of Justice Youssef Msaideen, the prime minister was briefed on the



Two shot dead in W. Bank

AMMAN (J.T.) — Unknown assailants Saturday shot and wounded three West Bank Palestinians, Palestinian reporters said.

The Palestinians were shot while driving in the village of Kabatiya, 70 kilometres north of Jerusalem, they said.

Israeli soldiers evacuated the wounded to hospital and clamped a curfew on the area, a military spokesman said.

Two bombs exploded near night patrols of Israeli soldiers in the Bureij refugee camp and the town of Deir Al Balah in the Gaza Strip, a military spokesman said.

Two other bombs were defused. There were no casualties.

Strike called

Palestinian hardliners George Habash and Nayef Hawatmeh have joined forces in opposition to Arab peace talks with Israel.

In a joint statement after a rare meeting in Damascus on Friday they called for a general strike in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip on Dec. 4, when the United States hopes talks will resume in Washington.

Dr. Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Mr. Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) are the second and third largest groups in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) after Yasser Arafat's Fatah.

The PFLP has boycotted the PLO Executive Committee since negotiations began in Madrid a month ago. Mr. Hawatmeh's group is still attending. Both are based in Syria, which is also taking part in the U.S.-brokered peace talks.

Their statement described the talks as a "new conspiracy" and a "new Camp David" based on Israeli proposals for limited self-rule which had been rejected by Palestinians.

"We call upon our Palestinian people... unify ranks, foil the American attempt to eliminate the Palestinian cause, and continue the uprising to achieve their rights," it added.

The two groups called on Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories to stage a general strike and hoist black flags, sign of mourning, on Dec. 4.

Their organisations made a similar strike call for Oct. 30, the day the Middle East peace conference opened in Madrid, but there was little response in the occupied territories.

The hardliners reject the PLO Executive's decision to let West Bank and Gaza negotiators attend the peace talks in which Israel refuses to meet the PLO itself.

"The PFLP, and DFLP confirm their adherence to the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and reject any attempt to minimise its role," the statement said.

He is held by the pro-Iranian Revolutionary Justice Organisation.

The diplomats confirmed that Mr. Pico was in the area on Saturday but said his precise movements were a closely guarded secret — as they have been since the United Nations began a drive to free all the hostages last August.

"Pico's back and because of that we expect at least one hostage to be released soon," a diplomat said. "But he has to make the kidnappers move each time. And that is the hard part."

The 42-year-old Italian, who shuttles between Damascus and face-to-face meetings with pro-Iranian kidnappers in Lebanon in the run-up to a release, has an unbroken record of bringing one or more hostages out every time he visits Syria and Lebanon.

Once Mr. Pico has met them at a secret rendezvous, the kidnappers usually provide the first public word of an impending release by sending a statement to an international news agency.

Mr. Pico then arranges the handover of the hostage or hostages to Syrian intelligence officers, who transfer them to Damascus.

"Every single release is the result of work... there are no shortcuts," Pico said after overseeing the release of Church of England envoy Terry Waite and American Thomas Sutherland on

Two-way battle seen on House floor today for speakership

By Mariam M. Shalhin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — New parliamentary alliances were drawn Saturday as two candidates withdrew from the race for the speakership of the Lower House, leaving the field open for a two-way battle between incumbent Abdul Latif Arabiyat, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, and Abdul Majeed Shreideh of the 17-member Constitution Bloc.

The first to declare himself out of the race was Suleiman Arar of the 16-member National Bloc in favour of Mr. Shreideh. As a result the political alliance in parliament changed.

The new National Constitutional alliance assured Mr. Shreideh of a minimum of 33 votes — the 17 votes from his own bloc and 16 from the National Bloc.

Three deputies from the six-member Independent Islamic Bloc are also expected to vote for Mr. Shreideh. The nomination of independent Islamist Deputy Mahmoud Huweimal for the post of second deputy to the speaker is expected to get the support of the Constitutional-National coalition if Mr. Shreideh becomes speaker.

At least two of the 10 independent deputies have pledged to vote for Mr. Shreideh — raising the prospect of the Constitution Bloc candidate getting 40 votes in the 80-member House.

After the last-minute withdrawal of Democratic Bloc Deputy Faris Nabulsi late Saturday evening, it became clear that Mr. Shreideh would also win the votes of two of the bloc's nine deputies.

Two of the Democratic Bloc deputies are expected to cast votes in favour of Dr. Arabiyat. Five are expected to abstain, members of the bloc said.

The 23-member Muslim Brotherhood Bloc is thus faced with the strongest organised opposition to date in Parliament.

The National Constitutional coalition, according to parliamentary insiders, was not an ideological one but rather a "marriage of convenience."

According to insiders, the National Bloc had four conditions which it pursued with vigour in return for Mr. Arar's stepping down.

"The National Bloc could ask for a lot since the Constitutional Bloc candidates cannot win without them," said

one deputy who has been following the inter-bloc negotiations.

The alliance drawn between the National and Constitutional Bloc was based on an agreement that guarantees a member of the National Bloc the position of first deputy speaker, the chairmanship of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the position of speakership during the next parliamentary session, according to the insiders.

The independent Islamists have always given their votes to the candidate that offered them a deputy speakership in the past two elections. During the first speakership election in 1989, the then seven-member bloc gave their votes to Mr. Arar and during the second election in 1990 they voted for Dr. Arabiyat after the Brotherhood Bloc promised them the position of first deputy.

Earlier this week, Awmi Bashir, one of the six independent Islamist deputies confirmed that his bloc would vote for the candidate that gives them an offer to be a deputy speaker. Since then the Islamist deputies have agreed to disagree and late Saturday Mr. Bashir confirmed that the bloc may not have a unified position.

Tehran newspaper expects one or two Americans to be freed soon

NICOSIA (R) — A Tehran newspaper said Saturday one or two of the remaining three American hostages in Lebanon would be released soon.

The Tehran Times, who has often proved accurate in predicting hostage releases, said it had no details of who the hostages might be or exactly when they would go free.

"Our correspondent in South Lebanon reports that he expects one or two American hostages to be free soon," a Tehran Times editor in the Iranian capital told Reuters by telephone.

The newspaper will run the story on Sunday, he added.

New releases are widely expected after U.N. troubleshooter Giandomenico Pico came back to the region on a mission to end the whole hostage saga by Christmas.

The three American hostages in Lebanon are Joseph Cicippio, Alann Steen and Terry Anderson.

There are also two German hostages, aid workers Heinrich Strubig and Thomas Kemper, who are being held by relatives of two Lebanese jailed in Germany. Western diplomats in Beirut said Mr. Cicippio had the best chance of being the seventh Westerner to be freed since August.

Mr. Cicippio, 61, an accountant at the American University of Beirut, was kidnapped as he walked to work on Sept. 12, 1986.

After Mr. Waite and Mr. Sutherland were set free, U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, who steps down as U.N. chief at the end of the year, said he had been promised the kidnappers would release all their Western hostages by Christmas.

"After the statements from Waite and Sutherland we had of course hoped for a release or releases sooner than this but this delay shows what a complex role Pico has," a diplomat said.

"Despite Iran's eagerness at last to end this problem, it is essential to success that Pico is on the front line," he added.

Mr. Sutherland and Mr. Waite, who was kidnapped while negotiating for the release of U.S. captives including the longest-held hostage Anderson, have said their captors assured them all three Americans would be out by the end of this month.

The Tehran Times, which is close to Iran's Foreign Ministry, said 10 days ago that one or two hostages might be freed within two weeks.

Pro-Iranian Lebanese leaders added to U.N. hopes that the seven-year hostage crisis would be over this year by announcing this month that releasing the Western hostages was no longer linked to Israel freeing its Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners.

Palestinians laud Soviet assistance

By Sana Atiyeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Palestinians expect a more prominent role for the Soviet Union in the Middle East peace talks after the reappointment of Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and after receiving indications that the Soviets intend to take a more active role that could help the Palestinians during the negotiations, a Palestinian delegate said Saturday.

Ghassan Al Khatib also said that the American letter of invitation to the Palestinians expected "negotiations of substance" to take place "in two tracks — a Palestinian-Israeli track and a Jordanian-Israeli track" — to take place in the next round of peace talks due to start in Washington Wednesday.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Khatib said that the Palestinian negotiating delegation and its guidance committee had felt more cooperation from the Soviet embassy in Israel before their trip to Amman by facilitating their trip across the King Hussein Bridge Friday.

"We felt there was more interest, more seriousness and more cooperation from the Soviet embassy in Israel," Mr. Khatib said.

Mr. Khatib said he expected a more prominent and active role for the Soviet Union in the peace talks because of Mr. Shevardnadze's assertive personality, but warned that the internal Soviet turbulence would prevent the co-sponsor of the Middle East peace talks from taking a "more distinguished" role (in favour of the Palestinians).

A delegation from the Palestinian team visited Moscow last week and met with Mr. Shevardnadze, after which they "left with valuable promises" that the Soviets would take a more active role in the peace talks.

"The impressions Mr. Shevardnadze left was that it will not be easy to accept a marginal role," said Mr. Khatib, a supporter of the Palestine People's Party (Communist).

The Palestinian team resorted to the Soviet embassy after the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem for the first time refused to ask the Israeli authorities to facilitate the Palestinian team's trip from the occupied territories.

"The Americans want us to directly contact the Israeli government because they think that it is alright to do so when dealing with procedural matters," Mr. Khatib said, adding that this was rejected by the Palestinian team.

The Palestinian negotiators and advisors normally submit to the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem a list of their names when travelling from the occupied territories, which in turn makes the travel arrangements with the Israeli authorities.

Mr. Khatib, a professor of economics at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank, said that the U.S.'s refusal to ask for facilitating their travel was an effort to pressure the Palestinian team to establish direct contact with the Israeli authorities.

Israel wants the Arab participants in the peace talks to make direct contact with the Jewish state to arrange procedure and logistics dealing with the peace talks. But the Arabs insist that the contact should be made through the co-sponsors in order to avoid normalising relations with Israel. The Palestinians reject direct contact with the Israeli government because they are still under their occupation.

"It is not possible to ask them

(the Israeli authorities) for facilities when we are going to negotiate with them on an equal basis," Mr. Khatib said. "We are not going to ask them not take off our clothes (when searched) at the bridge when we are going to negotiate with them."

The joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation will leave Monday for Washington. Mr. Khatib said that the U.S. letter of invitation to the Palestinian team had expected "negotiations of substance" to take place in the next round of bilateral talks with Israel.

Israel has so far rejected the Wednesday date set by the U.S. and insists that the Washington talks only deal with procedural issues. The Israeli government wants the negotiations of substance to take place in the Middle East, something the Arab sides reject and consider it an Israeli excuse to avoid progress in the peace process.

"The American invitation mentioned that they expect this round of talks to deal with substance and that there will be two-track negotiations, a Palestinian-Israeli track and a Jordanian-Israeli track," Mr. Khatib said.

The letter of invitation also mentioned "for each party to propose its views on the transitional phase."

The next round of bilateral talks have been expected to deal with the transfer of authority to the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip as a transitional phase that would lead to Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

But Mr. Khatib said that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was trying to avoid negotiations of substance to please some members of his coalition government who oppose negotiations with the Palestinians on such issues as the transitional phase and Jewish settlements.

"But if he (Mr. Shamir) does not enter real negotiations, he will lose the Americans," Mr. Khatib predicted. "Sooner or later, he will have to answer to the U.S. on whether he will start negotiations on serious issues."

The Palestinian team has also prepared a comprehensive report, entitled "Since Madrid: Israeli Confidence-Destroying Mechanisms." It details Israeli activities against the Palestinians in the occupied territories since the opening of the U.S.-Soviet sponsored peace conference opened in Madrid on Oct. 30.

Mr. Khatib said that the report documented the escalation of Jewish settlement activity and confiscation of Arab land in the occupied territories, Israel's arbitrary measures against the people, and "Israel's disinformation campaign."

The Israeli media campaign, he said, was attempting to distort the Palestinian public of the activities and intentions of the negotiating team. "They refer to us as the alternative leadership, for example. But the people are aware."

Mr. Khatib added that while the Israeli government had not shown any signs of "good will" to try to solve the Palestinian-Israeli problem, the Palestinians under occupation have.

"The peaceful demonstrations that took place in the occupied territories is very indicative of the fact that the peaceful and sincere position of the delegation is genuine and supported by the public," Mr. Khatib stressed.

Palestinians have demanded that as part of confidence-building measures, the Israelis should stop all settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, stop demolishing homes, and to release all Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

U.S. and Iran reach accord on assets dispute

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States, in a move that could improve ties with Tehran, said Friday it reached final agreement to compensate Iran with \$270 million for undelivered U.S.-made military equipment dating from before the country's 1979 revolution.

Spokesman Richard Boucher said final details were settled this week and the international tribunal at the Hague is expected to approve the agreement early next week.

The accord, under negotiation for 18 months, is an important step towards resolving financial differences between the two countries as the saga of Western hostages held by pro-Iranian extremists in Lebanon comes to a close.

Iran's assets in the United States were ordered frozen by Washington after radicals held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days in the U.S. embassy in Tehran. They have been tied up for a decade because of legal wrangling and have been a source of continued bitterness in U.S.-Iranian relations.

"The United States will pay \$278 million to settle a claim regarding Iranian military equipment that was in the United States for repair, testing or other purposes when our embassy in Tehran was seized in November 1979," Mr. Boucher told reporters.

The Hague tribunal previously upheld the U.S. refusal to return military property to Iran but ruled that Washington must compensate Tehran for its value.

The two sides agreed on the figure of \$278 million last February but details like how the payments would be made and where they would be sent were left until now to be worked out.

Mr. Boucher said that \$260 million would be paid by cheques to the government of Iran. The remaining \$18 million would be deposited in a security account to bring the account's total up to \$300 million to cover future rewards for U.S. claims against Iran, he said.

Iran's agreement to put the payment into the security account removes the last obstacle," Mr. Boucher said.

The United States refused to give the full amount directly to Iran. Tehran initially objected to putting a portion of the money in an escrow account, but recently relented.

The agreement comes as the plight of Western hostages appears near an end. Two hostages, American Thomas Sutherland and Anglican Church envoy Terry Waite, were released recently and the remaining captives are expected to be freed soon.

The U.S. administration, seeking to avoid any hint of a deal with Iran, has maintained that resolution of the Iranian assets dispute is unrelated to the plight of the hostages.

But the settlement of claims is one way both sides can reward each other for progress in the hostage negotiations.

U.S. officials attribute Iran's new willingness to settle the \$278 million claim with its need to appear to justify the hostage releases.

Some very large government claims, including Iran's multimillion-dollar claims arising out of the foreign military sales programme, as well as about 130 large private claims, remain pending at the Hague tribunal.



SHOW OF DEFIANCE: Member of Israeli parliament Gema Cohen visits settlers at an Arab East Jerusalem site to show her support against a ruling by Israel's attorney-general that the settlers could be removed by police for security reasons

Iraqis sell family silver to survive

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqis are selling the family silver to pay for food to survive.

"They even come to me with the spoons from their tables, really cheap stuff, just to get a few fils to buy food," said antique dealer Sabah Awad. "They are selling anything."

Silver jewellery, furniture and priceless carpets are being hawked on the streets of Baghdad these days by Iraqis trying to pile up cash to keep pace with runaway inflation.

Their government is also desperate to raise money for food. It scored its first victory Saturday in a campaign to unlock \$4 billion of assets frozen by the West.

Baghdad, complaining the padlocking of its cash is preventing it buying urgently-needed food and medicine for the young, old and sick, secured \$125 million held by Britain in exchange for freeing jailed British engineer Ian Richter.

It was the first time a major power in the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq had agreed to unfreeze assets held pending settlement of Gulf war reparation claims.

Iraqi Airways, grounded by sanctions, says it has won U.N. approval to send a plane to collect a cargo of meat from Sudan. But with winter setting in — and the government estimating it needs \$3 billion worth of food and drugs to maintain minimum living standards over the next few months — heirlooms are being used to stock up larders.

Sellers, and buyers like Mr. Awad, say U.N. sanctions are the reason that millions of dinars of valuables are being traded as the Iraqi currency loses its buying power by the day.

The needy take their wares, everything from silver samovars to ancient pearl-inlaid muskets, to the many antique dealers. The really desperate sell their at impromptu street auctions known as "souk al harrj" — markets of confusion.

At these a man will stand on a chair surrounded by items he has for sale. They can range from an ancient British phonograph to a single silver spoon and egg cup.

Mr. Awad, sitting on a pile of Persian rugs in his shop, was approached by a well-dressed but clearly anxious young Iraqi trying

to sell a silver necklace dripping with old coins and Islamic figures. No deal was struck.

"How much, and why are you selling?" a Western visitor asked the young man. "Anything I can get, and you know why I'm selling," he shot back. He slipped the necklace back into a wallet and disappeared into the teeming Baghdad souk.

Dealers are buying in the hope that one day, when the Gulf war and sanctions are a memory, foreign collectors will return in droves.

"When my collection is complete and foreigners start pouring into the country like they used to, then I'm sure I'll make big money," said one dealer in Bab Sharji souk in central Baghdad.

The only buying appears to be by wealthy Iraqis stocking up on the finest items they can lay their hands on — usually carpets.

"A fine carpet for many Iraqis is worth more than gold," said Najj Qeis. He keeps the most precious items out of sight in his dusty shop because of a crime wave caused by Iraq's new-found poverty.

"Collecting antiques is not a popular pursuit in Iraq," he said, gesturing at two Russian samovars, some old records and a selection of mismatched China. "People now just concentrate on survival."

Mr. Qeis sends his agents on field trips to Kurdistan, in northern Iraq, and to Basra in the south to go round private houses and scout out valuables. "They usually come back with good stuff."

As in all antiques dealings, families often do not know the value of their goods. "I sold a carpet to a dealer for 5,000 dinars for food. It was an Isfahan. The dealer auctioned it for more than 100,000 dinars," complained Samia Seraj, who sold her belongings for cash.

Other sellers are parents seeking gold to give to their children as wedding presents. "They sell lots of silver and buy a little gold," said one dealer.

Baghdad is not an Aladdin's cave. Iraqi law forbids the export of anything over 100 years old.

Before the Gulf war 5,000 dinars would buy a car. Now it would barely cover the cost of the tyres.

China signals improved ties with Israel

PEKING (R) — Chinese Premier Li Peng, in the latest sign of improved ties with Israel, said Friday that the Jewish state's sovereignty and security should be guaranteed.

Mr. Li made the statement in a message congratulating the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on its International Solidarity Day, the official New China News Agency said.

"The sovereignty and security of Israel should be respected and guaranteed," Mr. Li was quoted as saying.

At the same time he reiterated China's perennial stance on Palestine: "The legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people should be restored, the occupied Arab territories returned."

His positive remark about Israel is the latest in a stream of Chinese gestures which seem to point the way to the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen on Thursday told a delegation of American Jews that China and Israel may soon normalise relations, a member of the delegation said.

Rabbi Marvin Hier quoted Mr. Qian as saying: "Israel and China are both on a gradual and progressive approach with the ultimate goal of preparing for normal relations. With concrete efforts from both sides, that can be achieved soon."

The Chinese government has given no public indication of when it might establish ties with Israel. The two countries have never had diplomatic relations.

China is an old ally of the PLO, Israel's long-time adversary, and Peking has traditionally supported the Arab cause.

Mr. Hier is dean of Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles and is leading a delegation that will open the first exhibition in China on the Holocaust. The exhibition of documents and photographs opens in Shanghai Tuesday.

Contacts between China and Israel are growing rapidly.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Sudanese envoy waits to see Mubarak

CAIRO (R) — The Sudanese government, out of favour in Cairo for more than a year, has sent an envoy to Egypt, a Sudanese diplomat said Saturday. Mustafa Othman, a Sudanese minister of state, arrived late on Friday and hoped to see President Hosni Mubarak within the next few days, a spokesman for the Sudanese embassy said. Egypt supported the Sudanese military junta when it took power in 1989 but relations have steadily worsened since. Cairo, which traditionally wields enormous influence in Sudan, was angered when Khartoum backed Iraq in the Gulf war. It accuses the junta of helping Muslim extremist groups in Egypt. But in an interview in the Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram on Thursday, Sudanese head of state Omar Hassan Al-Bashir said he was ready to visit Egypt at any time "to discuss promoting ties and coordinating to form joint projects." Other than for an Arab League summit after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, General Bashir last visited Cairo in February 1990. Earlier this month Mr. Mubarak said ties with Sudan continued to be tense because of the Khartoum government's links with Hassan Tourabi, a Muslim fundamentalist leader whom Cairo accuses of promoting violence in several Arab countries. The embassy spokesman said Mr. Othman was carrying a letter from the military junta's deputy chairman, Al-Zubeir Mohammed Saleh, for Egyptian Minister of Agriculture Yousef Wali. Joint projects between the two countries, including the digging of the Jonglei canal in central Sudan, have stopped because of the eight-year-old civil war in southern Sudan. A spokesman for the Egyptian presidency said no date had been set for Mr. Mubarak to receive Mr. Othman.

Ghali urges Third World to seize chance

ALGIERS (R) — Boutros Ghali, set to become the new secretary-general of the United Nations, has called on the Third World to make use of the organisation to enable them to shape international affairs. In an interview broadcast on Algerian television, Dr. Ghali said the end of the cold war, which had formerly paralysed the United Nations, had given it a new ability to act. "The Third World should take an interest and work within the United Nations. If it concerns itself solely with regional and local questions, the Third World will miss this chance offered to it to play a role in internal affairs," Dr. Ghali said. "Here is a danger of the world's southern countries, and particularly Africa, of being marginalised after the rapprochement between the east and west which has concentrated all attention on Europe to the detriment of the Third World." The interview, broadcast late Friday night, was recorded in Venezuela where Dr. Ghali, Egypt's deputy prime minister, was representing President Hosni Mubarak at the Group of 15 summit.

Italy deports illegal immigrants

CAIRO (R) — Italy has deported 47 Egyptian job-seeking illegal immigrants who paid \$800 each to sail from Malta to southern Italy by night in small private boats, Cairo newspapers said Saturday. "We crossed to Italy at dawn on Wednesday (last week)," the state-owned newspaper Al-Gomhouriya quoted Fathi Abdul Azim Al-Isawi, 25, as saying. "We walked for five kilometres over farms in the mountains and were attacked by guard dogs. Then the police arrested us and moved us under close guard to Rome airport and then to Cairo." The semi-official newspaper Al-Ahram quoted Hassan Al-Huwari, a 37-year-old technician, as saying: "We also lost the money we borrowed in the hope of paying it back (from earnings in Italy)." The Egyptians flew to Malta individually and made contact with a gang which smuggles illegal immigrants to Europe. With Egypt's population growing by a million every eight months and the economy in recession, hundreds of thousands of young Egyptians leave school and college every year and spill onto a local job market that cannot fully absorb them. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians working in Iraq and the Gulf Arab countries, traditionally a vital prop to the country's economy, had to come home during the Gulf crisis last year.

Cyprus lifts ban on links with S. Africa

NICOSIA (R) — Cyprus announced a gradual abolition of sanctions against South Africa Saturday, lifting a ban on air links resuming sport and cultural exchanges. But economic sanctions remain in force. The Mediterranean island's government said the decision was taken "in view of the positive political developments in the country and in line with the recent decision of the Commonwealth summit in Harare for an immediate end to people-to-people sanctions." It said a ban on air links will be lifted and restrictions on tourism abolished. Consular restrictions will be lifted. Cultural, scientific and sport exchanges will be restored under conditions placed by the Commonwealth. A ban on the sale or transfer of weapons through Cyprus and economic, trade and commercial sanctions will remain in force until the conditions set by the Commonwealth are met, the government said.

Security council renews mandate of Golan force

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The Security Council on Friday unanimously approved another six-month renewal of the mandate of the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which serves as a buffer between the Syrian and Israeli armies on the Golan Heights. The 1,330-man force, comprising contingents from Austria, Canada, Finland and Poland, was established in May 1974. It monitors a troop disengagement accord reached between Syria and Israel a few months after the October 1973 East war. The council meeting lasted only a few minutes and there were no speeches.

Refugees hold open air church service

NICOSIA (R) — About 300 Greek-Cypriots who fled the north of Cyprus following the 1974 Turkish invasion held a church service on the green line of the world's last divided capital Friday. Holding candles, refugees from the Karpas peninsula on the northeastern tip of the Mediterranean island, gathered near the Ledra Palace checkpoint, the only crossing point between the Greek-Cypriot south and the Turkish-held north in Nicosia.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel. 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:30	Les Badabobs
17:50	La culture en questions
18:15	L'écrit des films
19:00	News in French
19:15	Carnet de notes
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	Golden Girls
21:10	Murder She Wrote
22:00	News in English
22:30	All the Rivers Run
PRAYER TIMES	
04:51	Fajr
06:12	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:34	Dhuhr
14:13	'Asr
16:36	Maghrib
17:57	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedisch Tel. 810740	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Terrence Church Tel. 622556	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 625431	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261	
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751	
Assam International Church Tel. 683526	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 623824, 654932	
Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691	
WEATHER	
Bullets supplied by the Department of Meteorology	
It will be cold, cloudy and rainy at times and winds will be westerly fresh. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy and there will be a chance for scattered showers of rain, while winds will be southerly fresh and seas wavy.	
Min./Max. temp. 5/10	
Aqaba 14/20	

DEPARTS	
2/13	Jordan Valley
10/21	Yamouk
Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 11, Aqaba 20. Humidity readings: Amman 96 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.	
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Bahjat Badr	899362
Dr. Yousef Sammour	615648
Dr. Abdul Majid Al-Shaar	791405
Dr. Jamil Marqas	778046
Persa pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al-Azma pharmacy	637055
Natrouk pharmacy	623672
Al-Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shamsi pharmacy	637660
BRIDJ:	
Dr. Ahmed Bishawi	(—)
Al-Shura pharmacy	278225
REPAIRS:	
Abdul Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport	08-53200
HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn.	644281/6
Akshel Maternity, J. Amn.	640412
Jabal Amman Maternity	642562
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shamsi	664171/4
Shamsi Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845455
Al-Musah Hospital	667277/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	77511/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
ZARQA:	
Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al-Hana Modern Hospital	(09)990990
BRIDJ:	
Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272775
Ibn Al-Nafies Hospital	(02)247100
FOR THE TRAVELLER	
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.	
ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
08:00	Jeddah (RJ)
09:30	Aqaba (RJ)

09:55	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05	Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:30	Beirut (RJ)
10:45	Cairo (RJ)
17:00	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:00	Madrid, Rome (RJ)
18:15	Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
19:20	London, Brussels (RJ)
BRIDJ:	
Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272775
Ibn Al-Nafies Hospital	(02)247100
FOR THE TRAVELLER	
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
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ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
08:00	Jeddah (RJ)
09:30	Aqaba (RJ)

MARKET PRICES

Other Flights (Terminal 2)		Upward price in fils per kg.	
09:35	Cairo (MS)	Apple	600/500
10:40	Moscow (SU)	Banana	500/450
10:50	Berlin (LH)	Banana (Miskamman)	550/500
10:55	Larnaca (CY)	Beans	250/200
10:55	Beirut (ME)	Cabbage	160/120
		Cauliflower	220/170
		Cauliflowers (large)	180/120
		Cauliflowers (small)	160/120
		Eggplant	280/220
		Garlic	800/700
		Grapes	900/800
		Green	500/400
		Lemon	500/400
		Marrow (large)	180/120
		Marrow (small)	350/300
		Okra	850/750
		Onion (dry)	170/120
		Pepper (hot)	250/200
		Pepper (sweet)	450/400
		Potato	300/250
		Sage	600/500
		Spinach	220/160
		Sweet onion	700/550
		Tomatoes	420/360

National Aid Fund capital increased by JD 3 million

AMMAN (J.T.) — The National Aid Fund (NAF) will have its total capital increased from JD 5 million to JD 8 million, registering nearly an increase of 60 per cent, according to allocations made for it in the 1992 fiscal budget.

An NAF official said that the increase reflects the new government's keenness in providing for the needy among Jordanian people, who are the main beneficiaries of NAF projects and direct financial assistance.

The increase reflects the government's concern over the growing numbers of needy Jordanians living in poverty, which has been on the increase lately following the economic crisis in the country which started around the mid 1980s.

He said that since 1986, when the NAF was established, a total of 18,934 needy families benefited from allocations for financial assistance totalling around JD

14.8 million.

The assistance included monthly salaries for the needy reaching about JD 40 a month and vocational and rehabilitation projects.

According to the official, another 800 families are to be added to the list of the needy. The NAF plans to finance 500 rehabilitation projects benefiting the poor people, he added.

In the past 10 months the NAF has spent JD 4.5 million on monthly salaries and rehabilitation schemes, he noted.

The Ministry of Social Development last month published the results of a survey which revealed that at least 20,000 families in Jordan now live in abject poverty and could be classified as starving had it not been for the help reaching them through the NAF and charitable organisations.

The study confirmed an earlier survey conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UN-

ICEF) which found that no less than 33 per cent of Jordanians live under the poverty line. The survey pointed out that at least 20,000 families are not only very poor, but live on charity handouts and assistance from the NAF.

The NAF is striving to expand its services to needy people, especially to those in need of medical care, and has been providing hearing aids, wheelchairs and other equipment to those in need of such help, the official noted.

The official quoted a recent study conducted by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) which referred to the lack of proper coordination among government aid funds for the poor and said that these funds and concerned institutions caring for the poor face common problems. This lack of coordination, he said, has led to improper and insufficient attention that should be given to the questions of poverty and unemployment in the Kingdom.

King opens parliamentary session

AMMAN (J.T.) His Majesty King Hussein Sunday opens Parliament's third ordinary session with a speech from the throne outlining the basic principles for the government's work in the coming stage, according to an announcement Saturday.

In his speech, the King is expected to outline the government's programme designed to fulfil the country's national goals in various fields, the announcement said.

The higher council for the interpretation of the Jordanian constitution had earlier considered the speech from the throne to serve as the new government's policy statement for which the government will seek a Parliament's vote of confidence.

Following the speech, the Lower House normally meets to elect a new speaker for the new session and to prepare a reply to the King and to elect various committees.

EC delegation, officials discuss ways of increasing cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein received at the Royal Court Saturday a visiting team representing the Socialist group at the European Parliament led by Claude Cheysson and discussed Middle East developments and the peace process.

The team was briefed by the King on Jordan's stand with regard to the peace process.

Mr. Cheysson briefed the King on the European Community's (EC) role in the upcoming multilateral talks. Mr. Cheysson said that Europe wants to increase its cooperation with the countries of the Middle East region.

Later, Euro-Arab cooperation in economic and trade fields and the role of the EC were discussed at meetings by the EC team with Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber.

The team discussed with the prime minister ways to promote scopes of cooperation between the Arabs and Europe in general and Jordan and the EC in particular.

Mr. Cheysson and the accompanying delegation were also received by His Highness Crown Prince Hassan. The meeting reviewed the peace process in the Middle East. Prince Hassan stressed the importance of the European role in the peace process and the multilateral talks that will follow.

At a meeting with Dr. Abu Jaber, Mr. Cheysson voiced the EC's appreciation of Jordan's active role in the Middle East, noting in particular that Jordan has been shouldering a major responsibility in dealing with the region's affairs.

Mr. Cheysson stressed the importance of continued EC-Arab cooperation in matters of mutual interest.

Dr. Abu Jaber exchanged with the EC Parliamentary team ideas about the peace process. He said that Jordan was attaching great importance to the EC role in promoting Euro-Arab relations and stressed the importance of enhancing mutual economic cooperation which can contribute to the establishment of a lasting peace in the region.

The foreign minister said Jordan was hoping that the EC



Claude Cheysson, who is heading a European Parliament delegation on a visit to Jordan, Saturday discusses economic cooperation and the peace process with Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker (Petra photo)

3 companies awarded contracts to build roads worth JD 22.7 million

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Public Works and Housing Saturday concluded three agreements with two local companies, and one foreign company for the construction of roads in the Kingdom at a total cost of JD 22.7 million.

Two companies, one Saudi and the other Jordanian, will build a stretch of road between Al Azraq and the Iraqi borders in the north-east at JD 5.1 and JD 5.9 million respectively, in 540 days.

The stretch of road is part of the 240-kilometre Amman-Iraqi border highway, which is being built at a total cost of JD 26.1 million. The whole project, which has been divided into four parts, is being financed through a

Japanese loan and partly by the Jordanian treasury.

The other agreement was concluded with a local company, which will build a stretch of the Zara-Ghor Haditha road at the cost of JD 11.7 million in 740 days. The treasury will finance 15 per cent of the project while the Saudi Development Fund will provide 40 per cent and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development 45 per cent.

The stretch is part of the Mafrag-Sweimeh Ghor Safi road which is 90 kilometres long.

Minister of Public Works and Housing Saad Hayel Surour signed the agreements with the general managers of the three companies.

Survey finds 3,200 expatriate families to invest in Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — A total of 3,200 Jordanian expatriate families returning from the Gulf region have expressed interest in launching investment projects in the Kingdom totalling JD 300 million with the purpose of contributing to the national economy and creating new jobs for the expatriates, according to a study conducted by the National Centre for Educational Research and Development (NCERD).

The study was based on a survey conducted on 16,500 expatriate families, nearly 100,000 citizens, the study noted.

The results of the study were announced Saturday by Dr. Victor Billeh, the NCERD president, who said that the survey was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning.

The survey covered information related to the types of projects the expatriates wished to initiate, the manner in which the plans will be financed and the geographic distribution of the projects, Dr. Billeh said.

He said that the various ministries and concerned institutions will be informed of the detailed outcome of the survey to enable them to take appropriate measures.

The study found that 141 families wished to carry out investment projects of about JD 100,000 in value or more. The rest wanted to carry out schemes ranging in capital between JD 10,000 and JD 50,000.

According to Dr. Billeh, more than half of those asked to give their views said they wanted to invest in trade, agriculture or industry.

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On World AIDS Day, U.N. calls for cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — As World AIDS Day is observed today, many countries throughout the world are taking time to assess the programmes they have in place to fight this deadly epidemic.

The United Nations, one of the leaders in combating the spread of the disease, has repeatedly called for member countries to highlight the importance of joint efforts in educating the public about AIDS.

On Saturday, William Draper, UNDP administrator, again emphasised the importance of cooperation in the campaign against the disease. Following are Mr. Draper's remarks:

"Each year, the United Nations system, governments, communities and individuals around the world unite to celebrate World AIDS Day. This year, World AIDS Day emphasises the theme of sharing the challenge, encouraging a commitment to the struggle against HIV everywhere. As the world enters the second decade of the epidemic, we must pause to take stock not only of its challenges but of the spirit of hope and the partnership with which people have responded

globally.

"This epidemic has clearly shown that people can change even quite intimate sexual behaviour. In the face of devastation, families and communities respond with concern and compassion. They provide the basis of our hope that the epidemic can be overcome.

"We have come to recognise that the epidemic impacts all aspects of human, social and economic development. It is critical that the response of the United Nations system be comprehensive, interdisciplinary and collaborative.

"UNDP and WHO recognised this as early as 1988, when they drew up the WHO/UNDP alliance to combat HIV/AIDS. The alliance recognises WHO's global leadership in health policy and programmes and UNDP's expertise in social and economic development. UNDP is now the single largest contributor to the WHO global programme on AIDS.

"UNDP is an active member of the management committee of the WHO global programme on AIDS and a contributor to its programmes at the global and

country levels. We have a mandate to collaborate with all United Nations agencies and organisations whose expertise can contribute to minimizing the adverse effects of the epidemic and preventing its further spread. These include UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO and the World Bank. Also, members of the GFA management committee. As well as FAO, ILO, the World Tourism Organisation and other parts of the United Nations System.

"The UNDP policy framework for its response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic places primary importance on supporting community initiatives and on responding in a gender-sensitive manner. The framework contains a set of guiding principles drawn from the global AIDS strategy. These underline all our work in this field including programme support and personnel policies and practices.

"UNDP recognises that it must build national capacity to respond to the epidemic not only in health ministries but also in ministries responsible for planning and finance, and in the productive and

social sectors, all of which are, or will be, involved as the epidemic spreads. Support in more than sixty provided to national HIV/AIDS programmes in more than sixty countries and this support is complemented through regional and interregional programmes.

"Affected communities throughout the world have developed programmes which respond to their own needs and concerns. Supporting families with infected members or families in which the productive adults have died, UNDP is committed to supporting these initiatives.

The role of community-based organisations is central to the development of effective programmes to prevent further infection and respond to the consequences of the epidemic. The work of communities has also been supported by non-governmental organisations who have developed prevention, support and care programmes.

"No one organisation, public or private, local or national, can cope solely through its own work. This must be a collective effort. UNDP is committed to sharing the challenge.

Jordanian dentists' delegation returns from conference

AMMAN (Petra) — A Jordanian delegation comprising 140 dentists returned to Amman from Baghdad after taking part in a conference organised jointly by the Jordanian and the Iraqi dentists associations.

Besides Iraq and Jordan, delegations representing several Arab countries participated in the conference, which concluded its works recently.

President of the Jordanian Dentists Association Irfan Sultan, who led the association's delegation, said the three-day conference discussed several working papers dealing with various dental specialisations.

He said an exhibition of dental medicines and equipment was held on the sidelines of the conference. Several Jordanian and Iraqi medical companies took part in the exhibition, he added.

The conference, Dr. Sultan said, was held to enhance cooperation

between the two Arab peoples in Jordan and Iraq, "particularly at a time when the economic embargo imposed on the Iraqi people still prevails," he said.

It was also held to promote and bolster professional, social and scientific relations between dentists in Jordan, Iraq and other Arab countries, he added.

Dr. Sultan said the participants had the chance to be familiarised with the situation in Iraq and the effect of the Gulf war on the various scientific institutions.

According to Dr. Sultan, participants issued in the final session of the conference a statement in which they condemned the economic embargo on Iraq and called for ending it, particularly with regard to medical supplies and foodstuff. The embargo was imposed on Iraq by the U.N. Security Council following its occupation of Kuwait in August 1990.



BOOK EXHIBITION — A two-week exhibition of scientific and technical books organised by the Jordan Book Centre was opened at the University of Jordan Saturday by University President Fawzi Ghar.

Welcome to Cyprus

The Director-General of Cyprus Tourism, Mrs. Phryne Michael, answering a question posed by a leading Arab journalist said: "I would like to assure our friends in the Arab World that for us tourism is not merely numbers. Our ambition is to offer to every tourist who comes to Cyprus all facilities so that he can enjoy his holidays to the maximum possible degree and thus leave our island a happier and more relaxed human being.

Today Cyprus is still a special place; despite its small size it offers a unique variety of scenery,

from golden sandy beaches to green pine-clad forests rich in rare species of plants which reach altitudes of more than 6,000 feet.

Cyprus has got excellent hotels and first class hotel apartments and the standard of service is of the highest level. All of our hotels and hotel apartments are very well furnished and very well equipped. All of them provide excellent international communication facilities.

The food in the hotels and restaurants is delicious and the Cyprus cuisine is renowned for its high standard and good taste."

Workshop to discuss pastoral communities

AMMAN (J.T.) — A workshop on "Pastoral Communities in the Near East: Traditional Systems in Evolution" will open at the Philadelphia Hotel in Amman today with the participation of eight countries, including Jordan.

The participants, all from Arab countries and Turkey, will hold the meetings until December 5, during which they will make field trips to the Karak Governorate to discuss pastoral communities and development projects.

The event is jointly organised by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in cooperation with the regional Centre for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Near East located in Amman. The organisers said that the delegates will exchange views and hold technical discussions on major issues of concern for the development of pastoral populations in the Near East region. They will also assess problems, changes and trends as well as make recommendations on policies and programmes that would reflect the populations' own aspirations.

The working papers will deal with pastoralism in Jordan and pastoral development in the participating countries, according to the organisers.

Cold fronts to bring more rain

AMMAN (J.T.) — A depression with several cold fronts will continue to affect Jordan today and tomorrow bringing in more rain with high winds, particularly in the north and central parts of the Kingdom, according to the Department of Meteorology.

A department official told the Jordan Times that the depression, centered over Cyprus, Saturday evening was affecting the whole eastern Mediterranean region. It is accompanied by several cold fronts which will bring in more rain. The current weather conditions, he said, are expected to continue through Monday.

According to the department, the cold fronts brought about a noticeable drop in temperature, which Sunday can reach no more than 10 Celsius, dropping 5 Celsius at night.

The rains are a blessing for

German delegation arrives for talks on economic cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — A five-member German economic delegation led by Winfried Fuchs arrived in Amman Saturday evening for a three-day visit and discussions on Jordanian-German economic cooperation. Mr. Fuchs, who is head of the Middle East and North Africa Desk at

the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation, and his team will hold talks with Minister of Planning Ziyad Fariz and other Jordanian officials over bilateral cooperation in the coming two years. The talks will cover German economic assistance to Jordan.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

FILM

★ Feature film entitled "Tabari: The Wind" at the American Centre — 7 p.m.



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Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahd Al Fanek

Why an economic adjustment programme

OBJECTIONS to the economic adjustment programme sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are many. Those who object loudly or dismiss the programme out of hand stand to gain politically in the street simply by showing themselves as anti-IMF, and anti-World Bank. But these objections do not serve the best interest of the country, if this interest is of real concern to those who object.

It is claimed that the adjustment programme represents an unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country. This is not true. The IMF does not, and cannot, impose its services or volunteer to help. The IMF staff do not come to a country until they receive an urgent invitation and call to assist.

The IMF, by the way, is an off-shoot of the United Nations. It was established after World War II to operate as the central bank of the central banks of the world. One hundred fifty two countries contributed its paid-up capital including Jordan.

The economic adjustment programmes are officially issued by the states concerned. The IMF would evaluate the programme and approve it or disapprove it. The state concerned can of course call on the experts of the IMF, mostly Indians and Pakistanis, to assist in the preparation of the programme to save time and to know which targets are acceptable and which are not acceptable

to the management of the IMF. Strictly speaking, the programme has to be decided by the concerned government. The IMF has no authority whatsoever to impose any decision that is not acceptable to the government. If the IMF were angered, it would withhold its own credit to the country concerned and refrain from asking the Paris and London clubs to help with debt rescheduling and relief.

It is also claimed that the IMF makes the decisions on behalf of the government, and that it is the IMF that decides for instance to raise the prices, reduce subsidies, impose a certain tax and the like. This is not true. The IMF may correctly observe that there is a huge deficit in the central government's budget, which is neither good nor sustainable. It recommends that the deficit should be reduced by a certain amount or percentage every year. In this respect the IMF does not interfere in the government decisions to achieve this agreed objective. The government remains free to choose the best ways and means, either by increasing revenues, or reducing expenditure, or a mixture of both. For example if the agreed target was the reduction of the budget deficit in a certain year by say JD 80 million, it will be left to the government to make it by imposing or increasing consumption tax, reducing subsidies, increasing the proceeds of income tax, raising the prices of water, electricity, fuel oil, or by any combination of the above.

Of course, it is natural and legitimate to criticise any economic programme. In economic, fiscal, and monetary policies there is no absolute right or wrong. The economic decision is a balancing or a trade-off between benefits and costs. But this does not mean that we can ask our university professors to make the programme for us. The approval of the programme by the University of Jordan or any local economist and their certification that the programme is, to the best of their knowledge, adequate and serious and is being adhered to, are not acceptable in Paris Club or London Club. Without the fund's official approval and pressure, the lenders — governments, banks and otherwise — will insist on their contractual rights and will not agree to rescheduling their debts or reduce their interest rate or grant any relief, which is the crux of the matter.

Jordan needs an economic adjustment programme, approved by the IMF, because its national economy badly needs adjustment and because it needs the cooperation of the creditors in order to overcome its financial troubles. The programme is convincing scientifically and does not represent intervention in the economic policies and decisions which remain the sole responsibility of the government, who can suspend the programme at any time if it finds a better alternative course of action.

New thresholds

IN RECENT press interviews and other statements, His Majesty King Hussein expressed hope and indicated progress towards an early end in current inter-Arab relations and improved climate for better cooperation and coordination. In this context, Jordan is pinning real hopes on the restoration of fraternal relations with Saudi Arabia as a matter of priority. The first occasion for an Arab meeting on a high level is the Islamic conference scheduled to be convened in Dakar on Dec. 9.

These developments are not only most welcome but also most helpful to the ongoing peace process projected to enter its critical second stage in Washington on Dec. 4. What better boost to the Arab bargaining position in their quest for an equitable and durable peace in the region than to have the brotherly Arab relations restored to their traditional level? As a matter of fact the Islamic forum may indeed serve as a launching pad for expanded Arab relations with a view to reaching new heights. Injecting such positive elements in Arab relations would surely leave their impact on the present search for a just and permanent settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially the Palestinian dimension. Thus the Arab World is likely to be once again on the threshold of a new and bright era that will augur well for the Arabs everywhere and to their causes. Needless to say, the Arab World became so demoralised in the wake of the Gulf war and in the process lost much of its stature and power in the international arena. The beginning of the end of that dismal chapter in the contemporary Arab history stands to regain for the Arabs everywhere much of what they had lost in the last year.

The King's interview with the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation also made very interesting revelations with regard to the domestic scene in the Kingdom. After translating the principles enshrined in the National Charter into deeds and actions, the Monarch said, the stage will be set for new elections either on their prescribed date or on an earlier date if the circumstances warrant the holding of early national elections. His Majesty was emphatic in saying, however, that the people will be the final arbiters of such solemn decisions. Granted much time would be needed to translate the pact into reality but there is every reason to think in terms of holding the next parliamentary elections on its edifice as soon as its components acquire the status of law in the country. The formation of new political parties to serve as the foundation of pluralistic democracy would surely call for new elections. Everyone in Jordan, including present parliamentarians, concede that the 1989 elections were lacking in more sense than one. Suffice to recall that there were no political parties on the basis of which the electorate could have made intelligent choices and cast their ballots accordingly.

As today marks the opening of the third session of Parliament with the King delivering the speech from the Throne outlining the future course of the country on the domestic as well as the external fronts, the eyes of all Jordanians will be focused on the speech to discern any new signals on the home front. Most of all the attention will be directed to how the government will envisage putting the National Charter into practice and the time framework that will govern this endeavour. Much time has already been lost in this regard and most probably Parliament will be called upon to act expeditiously for this purpose.

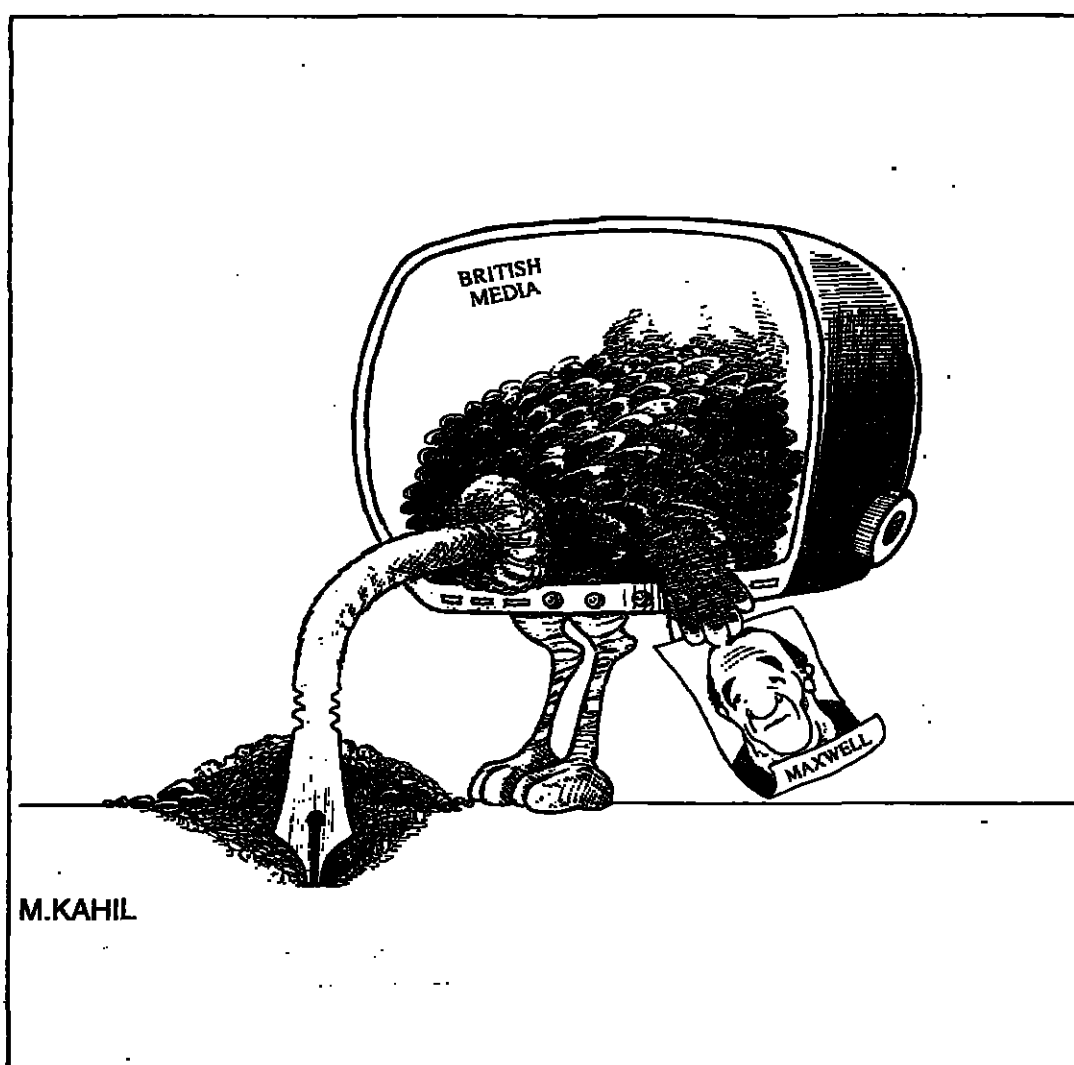
Israel, media tycoons and the conspiracy theory

By Mohammad I. Ayish

WHEN American investigative reporter Seymour Hersh published his book, "The Samson Option" (Random House, 1991), Israeli nuclear secrets were not the only gripping revelations. Mr. Hersh's expose of close links between the late media mogul Robert Maxwell and the Israeli prime minister's office and the secret service, Mossad, was equally astounding. Mr. Maxwell, who died Nov. 5, 1991 after his body was found floating nude off the Canary Islands, had headed a \$2 billion publishing empire of which London's "Daily Mirror" and the "New York Daily News" are two outstanding publications. The media magnate, who was buried in Jerusalem, also had a majority share in Israel's "Maariv" newspaper and a \$300 million investment in the Jewish state.

Although Mr. Maxwell's death is still shrouded in mystery, his reported liaisons with the Israelis seem to underscore Israel's deep penetration of a good number of media institutions which enjoy profound influence on public opinion and intellectual discourse in the West in general and in the United States in particular. For journalism academics and professionals, the disclosure of Mr. Maxwell's Israeli connections should offer an opportunity for considering many of our hypothetical assumptions regarding the forces that seem to bear on Western media reporting and portrayal of the Middle East. This issue has been debated in scores of academic and professional meetings, research works and media commentaries. Yet, there seems to be no consensus on defining the mechanisms through which those forces impinge on media editorial and programming decisions. While some have cited professional, cultural and psychological reasons for the mostly lopsided Arab images and favourable Israeli portrayals, others have blamed the Arabs for their poor performance in European and American arenas.

The least popular school of thinking on the issue has been associated with the conspiracy



theory. Proponents of this viewpoint, though very few, assume deliberate media attempts to distort Arab images and polish Israeli ones in fulfillment of pre-planned schemes of actions. In blunt terms, negative Arab and positive Israeli coverage appears systematically in some European and American media simply because executive and editorial staff were either on the Israeli payroll, or because they were politically and emotionally supportive of Israeli policies and actions. This brings us to conclude that purposeful media involvement in promoting Israeli interests does amount to what is called in social sciences "realpolitik." Such media playing of power politics is

often dismissed by mainstream academics and journalists in the West as contravening the basic tenets of journalism as an independent and objective "Fourth Estate." It has been argued that media operating in a democratic setting usually share an adversarial relationship with government(s). Conspiracy thinking does not enjoy widespread appeal among social science scholars and journalism practitioners simply because it seems to defy the basic logic of scientific investigations which draw on first-hand observations of reality. Data on the intricate relationships between some Western media, on the one hand, and Israel and its

apologists on the other hand, are not always within the reach of researchers and investigative reporters. And it would take a once-in-a-time leakage by a disgruntled informer to make the revelation.

When Alfred Lilienthal, the American Jewish scholar mostly known for his anti-Zionist convictions, published his book "The Zionist Connection" some 15 years ago, reaction among academic and professional communities was characterised by low enthusiasm and perhaps sheer apathy. It was argued that the book thrives on conspiratorial premises of analysis, and seems to ignore the processes through which political and sentimental

tendencies of media staff trickle down to communication messages which appear in the form of broadcast programmes and print content. Similar works by such towering intellectual figures like Naom Chomsky and Edward Said and by former U.S. Senate Paul Findley have been given lip service among Western academics and professional journalists in the West, something that stood in sharp contrast with the extensive fanfare these works received in the Arab World.

Obsessed with building theories in relationships among phenomena sharing certain denominators, we in the scholarly community have exhibited an unnecessarily extraordinary sensitivity and loathe to even raising the question of conspiracy in media analysis. Alternative methods of investigating external influences (commercial interests, political groups, national and foreign governments... etc) have been approached within what social scientists call "media sociology," the study of how different factors impinge on media content and cause it to appear as it does. The farthest frontier reached by researchers trained in the tradition of quantitative investigations, was to probe into correlations rather than causal relationships between hypothesised influences and patterns of media content. When those correlations happen to be highly positive, we tend to affirm the notion that even such highly-positive correlations should in no way imply that presumed influences have direct bearing on media output.

The writer of this article in no way condones conspiratorial thinking when addressing Western media reporting of the Middle East. The overwhelming majority of Western journalists are to be commended for their firm commitment to the highest standards of the profession. Such commitment was nowhere more manifest than in the reporting of the three-day Madrid Mideast peace conference. Yet, the Israeli penetration of Western media institutions, as suggested by the Maxwell case, cannot be overlooked. While mere Jewish ownership

of media institutions may not necessarily be indicative of pro-Israeli stands, there have been examples of systematic negative Arab coverage by Western media operating under the editorships of Israeli apologists and sympathisers. The fact that those media persist on projecting favourable Israeli images may be explained by social scientists as reflecting long-institutionalised policy lines of those in charge, which appears to be different from saying that conspiratorial thinking was at work. The issue may eventually boil down to a semantic problem or to a problem of intentions — did the editorial staff merely express their professional, political and cultural convictions when dealing with information from the Middle East, or was deliberate "actual malice" involved? This perhaps is a difficult question to answer.

It is true that conspiratorial thinking, when blindly used, will prove to be dangerous and useless. Such thinking is bound to increase mistrust between us and Western journalists who are never ready to accommodate the notion of being less than independent, objective and adversarial. It is also true that such thinking does obfuscate a healthy, objective and rational method of arriving at facts by both social science researchers and investigative journalists. Yet, it should be kept in mind that it would be more dangerous and less objective to underestimate the thinking of people like Chomsky, Said, Lilienthal and Findley, who provided detailed, though selective, accounts of how pro-Israeli groups and media apologists influence coverage of Arab and Israeli issues and events in the U.S. media. These men were not explicitly referring to a conspiratorial role as "such," and Seymour Hersh's recent revelation about the Maxwell affair seems in its basic configuration to suggest what they have long preached.

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In alien custody — an exile's return to Palestine

By Ghada Karni

An underclass

I HAVE returned from a personal journey to the land of my birth, Palestine. In the 43 years since my family's flight from war-torn Jerusalem in 1948, I had never returned. Going there after four decades on psychological avoidance was therefore both a challenge and a threat. Many "diaspora" Palestinians like myself dread to see the homeland they once knew in alien custody, and stay away, preferring to keep their memories unsullied. As it turned out, my visit was further overshadowed by apprehensions and ambivalence about Palestinian participation in the Middle East peace conference in Madrid. It is undeniable that, despite the painful evidence of history and experience, for many Palestinians the Madrid conference seemed to hold out a magical hope of an end to the conflict. But, for me, travelling round Israel, there was a tragic — almost obscene — dissonance between the illusory expectations raised by the conference and the grim reality of the situation for Palestinians under Israeli rule. What I saw during my visit was so disturbing that it makes the speculation about the achievement and outcome of the Madrid conference seem irrelevant. Of course, I was not ignorant of the situation in Israel before I went — few Palestinians in exile are. But I was unprepared for the concrete reality of Israel's takeover of what had been an Arab land only 43 years ago.

Driving, for the first time, along the highway from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, I saw little to remind me of the Palestinians, once the majority and now reduced to a minority in their own country, who still live there with the new Jewish population. Most place names on Israel's roads, for instance, are in Hebrew and English, even though it is Arabic which is, theoretically, the second official language of the state. Where Arabic names do appear, usually around towns with Palestinian populations, the script is small and insignificant. Most bizarre of all, in Gaza — with a Palestinian population of over 700,000 — signposts on the main roads exclude Arabic altogether.

This obliteration of a linguistic reality has had psychological effects as well. A small incident at a restaurant in the Arab village of Abu Ghosh on the road to Jerusalem illustrates this. Abu Ghosh managed to survive the physical obliteration of Palestinian villages carried out by the Israelis in the 1950s, although it is now bisected by the main road, its community artificially divided. We stopped there because I was eager to make my first contact with "Israeli" Palestinians. Naively, I expected to be uncritically welcomed and accepted as one of them, as if time had stood still for both of us since 1948. Instead, the waiters were wary and nervous, uncertain as to who I was and unwilling to find out. Later, in a Palestinian res-

taurant in Jaffa, I experienced a much more accentuated form of this reaction. There, the waiter avoided speaking Arabic altogether and preferred to deal with my Israeli companions instead, whom he treated with the deference of a servant towards his masters. I was painfully aware that Palestinians in Israel have become an underclass, mainly confined to menial jobs and caught in an intricate web of racist practices and attitudes which the majority of Israelis accept uncritically as a natural part of everyday life. Those Israelis I mentioned this to were genuinely distressed and insulted by the imputation of racism.

The most immediate impression, however, was of the physical changes to the landscape. The approach to Jerusalem was particularly instructive. In my memory, the hills around it used to be beautiful, sandy green sentinels shadowing the city itself. But now each hilltop is covered with unsightly settlements; crowded mass housing which crawls down the hillsides like a concrete fungal growth. Indeed, all settlements in Israel and in the occupied territories are built on the tops of hills, as if to proclaim in stone their intention to dominate. Upper Nazareth started as a settlement built on the hills above the Arab town. With generous support from the government (Israeli municipalities receive two thirds more funding than do Arab ones), it expanded rapidly and its sprawling mass now threatens to literally choke the town below.

Annexation gathers pace Jewish settlements are going up virtually overnight in the occupied territories and are being integrated into a masterplan designed to control the whole region. North of Jerusalem, for example, a grid-shaped network of roads is being carved out of Palestinian land to connect the settlements to each other and to Jerusalem. The grid network will fragment and isolate Palestinian villages and farms, and thereby supplement the effects of land dispossession. To date, 63 per cent of land in the occupied West Bank and 40 per cent in Gaza have been appropriated by Israel. Even more seriously, 80 per cent of West Bank water has been diverted for Israeli use. As the talks about peace take their leisurely course, the annexation — no longer creeping — of Palestinian land and resources proceeds apace. The effect of that on people's lives is devastating.

When I visited what is left of my family in the West Bank town of Tulkarm, I found them waging a daily and unequal struggle against the Israeli occupation which may soon overwhelm them. A combination of heavy taxation and loss of land, as well as army brutality — while I was there, some dozen unarmed youths were set upon by soldiers and beaten senseless as we looked on helplessly — may soon drive them and others like them away. And this is of course Israel's not-so-hidden agenda: to make life so intolerable for Palestinians that they will "trans-

fer" themselves voluntarily, and leave the land for "Greater Israel."

In some places that has already occurred, in effect. I tried to find the house in which I was born and where I grew up in West Jerusalem. It proved to be a daunting task. So much had been changed in our neighbourhood since it was appropriated in 1948 that it took me three anguished journeys to locate the place where our house had been. And, in the end, I discovered that it had been demolished and replaced, incredibly, by a synagogue. I found this depressing enough, but more was in store. The Judaisation of Jerusalem is an accelerating reality, nowhere more outrageously so than in the Old City. Before seeing it, I had felt that the Old City would surely be the last, unassailable bastion of Arabness. But I was wrong. For here, even in the Muslim Quarter, in the heart of the narrow streets which lead to the holy Islamic shrines of Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock on the Haram Al Sharif, a huge menorah atop an old Arab house guarded by Israeli soldiers announces that the Israelis have arrived here too. This is the house bought by the Israeli housing minister, Ariel Sharon, which he rarely uses but keeps as a symbol of the Israeli presence in the Old City. I discovered that other Arab houses in the vicinity are also being acquired, helter-skelter, for Israeli use. If this process continues, the Palestinians of East Jerusalem will, one day, face the same

fate as mine.

A country only for Jews

The overwhelming message that I and every visitor is meant to carry away from Israel was eventually made crystal-clear to me: this is a country only for Jews. There is no room for anyone else. Every day, this message is being translated into reality, by settlement building, by land expropriation and by the deprivation of rights aimed to make Palestinian lives there intolerable.

How, then, is one to reconcile the grim reality of this situation with the arcane manoeuvrings of the current U.S.-sponsored peace process? Without an immediate halt to Israel's colonisation of the occupied territories and a complete end to its military occupation, any Palestinian settlement peace process achieves will be meaningless. And in the long term, the issue of Israel's racism towards the Arabs both inside and outside its borders will have to be addressed. So long as Israel maintains its insistence on the exclusive claim of world Jewry to Arab land and resources, it will continue to be an uncomfortable and potentially dangerous neighbour, even within agreed borders. And yet, on all these crucial issues, the U.S. is resoundingly silent.

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ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily said Saturday that the speech from the Throne, which will be delivered Sunday to Parliament upon the start of its new session, is expected to be based on the King's letter to the government upon its formation. The speech from the Throne is also expected to reaffirm the basic principles contained in the letter which urged the new government to initiate a new era of fruitful cooperation with the legislative authority in order to deal with the chronic problems in the country, the paper said. It said that the Jordanians look with hope towards such fruitful cooperation because it will no doubt benefit them and the country's economy of the present and the future. The Jordanians stand united behind their leadership and are hopeful that cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities will be practised in word and deed. The Cabinet members and the members of Parliament are personalities chosen for their task because they are capable of shouldering their responsibility and are determined to continue the process of democratisation in all its aspects, the paper said. It said that the Jordanian citizens hope that the excesses on the part of either party, which marred the democratic process, would not be repeated and that the two authorities' attention would be focused on matters designed to safeguard national interests.

A columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily called on Arab countries now negotiating with Israel to enlist their assistance of experts like Dr. Farouk Al Baz, the director to the U.S. space centre in Boston. Salah Abdul Samad said that Dr. Al Baz would be of vital benefit for the Arabs in their discussion about the water resources of their region since he is an expert on remote sensing techniques employed for the discovery of natural resources and underground water. The writer noted with delight the ideas Dr. Al Baz imparted to the students of the Baccalaureate School in Amman two days ago, and said Jordanian universities would do well to invite this scientist to deliver lectures for the benefit of the students and the nation at large. The writer said Israel has its scientists helping its leaders in their upcoming negotiations with the Arabs over the water resources and their distribution under a peace agreement. It is time, he said, that the Arabs enlist their own scientists and experts to help them achieve advantages in the coming Arab-Israeli talks and assist in the economic development of the Arab World.

Information campaign needed to stem AIDS spread

By Waleed Sadi

ON the occasion of World AIDS Day that falls today, the Jordanian Ministry of Health revealed, a few days ago, that the total number of AIDS cases in the country has risen to 66, of which 59 are Jordanians.

On the surface, these statistics may suggest that the spread of the HIV virus in the Kingdom is not yet serious enough to call for concern and worry. Some Jordanians may also read into such figures as a sign to relax their vigilance against further spread of the disease. Even concerned governmental authorities treat the

highly infectious disease as so much under control that it needs little more attention than what is already being done to protect the people from it. Yet, in view of the fact that the AIDS virus is still spreading worldwide, with about 9 million men, women and children already infected by it and their lives and the lives of their loved ones devastated by it, it would be indeed more prudent not to lower the country's guards even though the problem appears checked for the time being.

Being a touristic country with anticipated rise in tourism — especially if there will be a settlement of the Arab-Israeli

conflicts — there is every reason to believe that the AIDS crisis will be compounded in the coming years. Besides, Jordanian tourism to foreign and exotic lands is also on the rise and that may also mean more and more possible contacts with the disease.

If these two projections are taken in conjunction with the fact that the treatment of the disease is still nowhere in sight, one should conclude that the stage is set for the proliferation of the cases of AIDS in this country as well.

True, the Ministry of Health appears to be on top of things for the time being and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the National Committee to Combat AIDS is taking several precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Nevertheless, there is a great deal more that needs to be done. To begin with, the dissemination of information about the health problem is still low-key and ineffectual. Many Jordanians have only heard that there is an ongoing wide-scale campaign to educate the public about the issue. And this claim comes in stark contrast with the fact that neither Jordan Television nor Jordanian dailies have been devoting any meaningful attention to the subject.

Maybe it is our traditional mores that keep our mass media from granting full exposure of the problem. If this is the case, then it is high time

that we amend our traditions and perspectives to the extent necessary to deal with contemporary problems, be they health related or otherwise.

The current once-a-year highlighting of the AIDS situation in the country and elsewhere in the world simply cannot do. All Jordanian adults need to become fully versed in the nature of the sickness and in effective ways and means to avoid and fight it. Even the Jordanian medical profession is negligent in this endeavour. For example, at a time when the industrial nations of the world had become agitated, and rightly so, about the spread of AIDS from dentists or their equipment, Jordanians have yet to hear about new guidelines being issued to dentists on how to prevent and combat the disease. In this vein, one wonders how many Jordanian dentists have heeded the most recent medical revelations about the role of dentists and their equipment in the proliferation of the HIV virus.

Jordanians have a right to know if their dentists are disinfecting their equipment after each patient. The same goes to other medical branches operating in the country. Meanwhile, the public has a human right to know all that is to know about the disease in order to serve as a watchdog over their physicians and dentists and at the same time protect themselves from the horrific disease.

Palestinians want to believe they will get self-rule, but...

By Robert Mahoney
Reuter

GAZA — During the Middle East peace conference some Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip pushed olive branches through the window of an army jeep while others stoned it.

The battle between Palestinians over U.S.-led peace efforts is still raging one month later as Arabs and Israelis prepare for the second stage of the conference in Washington in December.

The olive branch wavers, supporters of Yasser Arafat's Fatah wing of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), so far have the upper hand.

Opponents such as Islamic fundamentalists and radical Marxist factions of the PLO have mustered only a few thousand supporters for demonstrations in the Gaza Strip.

The historic Madrid conference in late October breathed new life into Palestinians who for the first time in 24 years of military occupation saw their leaders treated as equals with Israelis before the world's television cameras.

"Madrid was like an injection for us after the Gulf war," Arafat Helo, a Gaza shopkeeper said to approving nods from his customers. "It soothed our nerves and made us feel better."

The euphoria after the despair of backing the losing side in the Gulf conflict is such that it frightens many Palestinian leaders and even some Israeli security officials.

They fear that inflated expectations will lead to frustration and perhaps renewed violence if the peace process fails to deliver the minimum Palestinian demand — autonomy and an end to military occupation.

Nowhere are those fears greater than in Gaza, cradle of the four-year-old Intifada against Israeli rule, and a hotbed of Islamic resistance.

"The mood in Gaza after Madrid has encouraged me but at the same time it has frightened me," said Fathi Abu Meddin, one of four Gaza delegates to the peace conference.

The delegates have been touring the crumbling towns and refugee camps of the Mediterranean coastal strip explaining the peace process at unprecedented public meetings.

During this time the army has turned a blind eye to Fatah-organised peace marches and political activity while continuing to break up other demonstrations. Fatah activists have also stopped stoning troops.

"In these meetings with the people, you feel that they are lifted by the wings of hope into the sky," Mr. Meddin said. "We try to keep them on the earth. We are frightened because if we cannot achieve at least in one year something for them they will be frustrated. We keep telling them this is the first step in a journey of one thousand miles."

This fear has prompted the four delegates to backtrack on long-approved PLO plans to form the first Arab council in 11 years to run sorely-needed municipal

services in Gaza, a decaying city of more than 250,000 people. It is the biggest city in the West Bank and Gaza Strip without such a council. Israel has indicated it would allow Saudi Arabia and the EC to channel funds through the council.

"I am against the timing of a municipality in Gaza," Mr. Meddin said. "Everybody will ask: 'Is this the only result from Madrid?' That is why we are trying to stop it."

Fayez Abu Rahme, the lawyer nominated to form the council, rejects any link between it and the peace process. He has vowed to set up the municipality but he has agreed to postpone it for several weeks.

Fatah activists know the political tide could turn in favour of Islamic groups if the peace process leaves Gazans empty-handed.

The outlawed Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad are hoping to make political capital out of that frustration.

"During Madrid some people believed the peace process will end the occupation," Islamist Mohammad Al Zahar said.

"Now they have started thinking about the difficulties and in a few months they will see, as we say in Arabic, there is nothing under the dome, no results."

The Islamic parties, who want nothing less than an Islamic state in all of pre-1948 Palestine, dismissed their poor showing in recent Gaza Chamber of Commerce elections as inevitable. Political activity is banned in

the occupied territories so elections to professional associations are a useful barometer of political trends, the Islamic groups, which claim the support of half of the Gaza Strip's 750,000 inhabitants, expect to fare better in elections for the associations of engineers, doctors and lawyers beginning in January.

Israeli security sources believe Palestinian frustration could boil over into renewed attacks against soldiers and civilians. The Intifada has been virtually dormant since Washington's peace mission began in March.

Palestinian leaders fear failure would plunge their long-suffering people into even deeper gloom and, of course, cost them their own political careers.

"What we get out of Washington depends on how much pressure Bush is going to put on Shamir," said academic Saud Hasouna, reflecting the widely-held Palestinian view that only U.S. arm-twisting of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir will bring them self-rule.

"We have to temper our optimism with realism. Nobody in the PLO was against the olive branches as a symbol of peace... but those who threw them at soldiers displayed an emotional and ignorant reaction," Mr. Hasouna said. "They represent no one."

The old shopkeepers were kinder. "We needed some hope, something to cheer about... We know Israel does not intend to make peace. Those men who sent to Madrid wanted to show the world we exist, that's all. We had nothing to lose."

South Koreans put champagne back on ice

By Lim Yun-Suk
Reuter

SEOUL — Criticised for popping open the champagne too quickly, South Koreans are now being exhorted to cork it up, at least for now, and return to work.

For some time, South Koreans turned a deaf ear to warnings that they were celebrating their country's stunning economic success too soon with a non-stop shopping and spending spree.

Rather prematurely, our fellow countrymen tried to rest on the laurels they had earned by hard work in a short span of time, telescoping the gradual growth of advanced nations," the English-language Korea Herald said.

"In the meantime complacency, luxury, sloth and extravagance have crept in to subvert the foundation of the economy, combined with reverses in the external economic arena," it added in a recent editorial.

But no more. South Koreans are witnessing a government-sponsored nationwide campaign under a theme of "work more and spend less."

A South Korean employee is now urged to work 30 minutes more a day and save 10 per cent of his or her income.

South Koreans toiled 51.1 hours a week in 1988 and 46.3 in the first quarter of 1991, compared with a 40-hour week in the United States and a legal work week of 46 hours in Japan. This month, about 500 business and labour representatives staged a rally to inaugurate a "five a week more" campaign.

Organised by South Korea's five major business associations, and called on South Koreans to be more hard working, more thrifty, save more, produce and export more.

South Korea's trade deficit for the first 10 months of this year hit a record high of \$10.06 billion from \$3.89 billion a year earlier. However, many wonder how long the campaign will last and how effective it will be.

"It's a good idea. But before telling us workers to save more and work harder, let the rich ones and the government start first," a

taxi driver said.

The feeling is shared by many other South Koreans who complain that it's not they who are the problem, but the newly prosperous.

A strong egalitarian streak runs deep within the Korean character. Coupled with a perception that the country's new wealth has not been equally shared it has fuelled popular support for the current campaign.

"They (the haves) are the ones on the spending spree. They are the ones who can afford to," a businessman in his early 30s said. "They are the ones who must be stopped."

South Korea's trade partners, particularly the United States and the European Community, are also sceptical and some Seoul-based diplomats question whether this year's austerity campaign is merely last year's anti-import drive recycled.

On a recent visit to Seoul, U.S. trade representative Carla Hills warned Korea in a speech: "We are watching closely to ensure that U.S. exports are not severely affected. The current frugality campaign can be a euphemism for anti-import activity."

Many South Koreans feel the their country's economic gains will be at risk if the current campaign does not succeed.

"Now is the crucial moment for the nation to choose between another take-off to join the advanced countries and falling back to the status of an underdeveloped nation," the Korea Times said.

Minister of Trade and Industries Lee Bong-Suh said if the nation was to join advanced countries, then it must renew its traditional work ethic, or fall back to the underdeveloped category.

In a recent nationwide survey, 84.2 per cent of South Koreans said they believed the economy was in serious trouble.

"The government has to do something about the economy now. If not then we're really in trouble with no way out," the president of a construction company said.



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Mexican president earns less than \$2,000 a month

MEXICO CITY (R) — The most powerful man in Mexico, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, can hardly consider himself among the best paid.

The Mexico City daily La Jornada says his net pay was the equivalent of less than \$2,000 a month in 1991, although his salary was up 11.4 per cent from the previous year.

Mr. Salinas's gross income was about \$3,850 a month, according to a budget ministry document cited by La Jornada, but half was swallowed up by taxes. His actual take-home pay was \$1,912 a month.

A senior public servant said he was unable to confirm the newspaper report but stressed that government officials earn far more through fringe benefits and "special allocations".

U.S. central bank approves major mergers

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) gave its approval Friday to two major bank mergers that would create the third- and fourth-largest banking powerhouses in the United States.

The Fed approved a proposed merger between New York's Chemical Banking Corp. and Manufacturers Hanover Corp., which together would make up the third-largest bank with \$135 billion in assets.

The central bank also said it would allow NCNB Corp. to merge with C.S. Sovran Corp. in a marriage of two big southern institutions that would create the nation's no. 4 bank.

NCNB and C.S. Sovran would have total assets of \$116 billion. A pending merger between Bank of America and Security Pacific Corp., which the Fed has not ruled on, would create the nation's second-biggest bank after Citicorp.

The Fed's approval appeared to be the last major obstacle for the proposed merger between Chemical and Manufacturers Hanover.

The central bank said the U.S. justice department had already reviewed the merger "and concluded that... the transaction would not have a significantly adverse effect on competition."

The two mergers, first announced in July, illustrate the heavy pressure on big banks to search for partners in a bid to combat overall weakness and stiff competition in the industry, analysts said.

Both deals will result in thousands of layoffs as the banks move to contain costs and streamline operations.

Parliament approves German budget for 1992

BONN (R) — Germany's lower house of parliament Friday passed the government's 1992 budget draft, which foresees spending of 422.1 billion marks (\$262 billion) and a deficit of 45.3 billion marks (\$28.1 billion).

Roughly one-quarter of total spending, or 110 billion marks (\$68 billion), will go to help what used to be communist East Germany adapt to a market economy.

The 1991 budget foresees spending of around 410 billion marks (\$254.1 billion) and a federal deficit of around 66 billion marks (\$40.9 billion). Higher tax revenues will push the deficit sharply lower in 1992.

The budget includes spending of 91.3 billion marks (\$56.5 billion) by the labour ministry, which is struggling to finance benefits for mounting numbers of unemployed workers in East Germany.

Soviet crisis deepens as budget funds dry up

MOSCOW (R) — The Soviet Union plunged deeper into economic crisis Friday as its central banker announced that the country's budget funds had dried up.

Viktor Gerashchenko, chairman of the state bank Gosbank which channels money to the central budget, said cash for this purpose had run out and no more transfers could be made without a decision from parliament.

"In this connection, we were forced this morning to stop such payments," he told state television.

The crisis throws into jeopardy the livelihood of millions of Soviet teachers, soldiers, doctors, police and parliamentarians, all of whom are paid from the central budget.

Mr. Gerashchenko said Gosbank took the decision to halt payments Thursday evening, a few hours after the Soviet parliament failed to approve a credit of 90.5 billion rubles (\$156 billion at the inflated official rate) to cover the fourth quarter budget deficit.

"We reached the conclusion that the final limit of treasury resources permitted by the budget or by presidential decrees... had run out," he said.

Mr. Gerashchenko urged the Soviet parliament, which has authority to approve the transfer of budget funds from Gosbank, to meet Monday, a day earlier than scheduled, to resolve the crisis.

He accused deputies of "political manoeuvring" in blocking the credit Thursday, saying deputies from the Russian Federation were particularly to blame.

"It's possible to speak of the torpedoing of this important question," he said.

The wrangle is linked to a bitter economic struggle between Russia and its fellow republics as the old-style Soviet Union breaks up in the wake of last August's failed coup.

Russia has said it will pay for salaries and other essential items but will refuse to finance high-spending central Soviet authorities.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar has described the requested budget credit as a blank cheque.

In a separate development, Gosbank said it was freeing Soviet Banks from next week to set their own rate for buying hard currency from tourists and selling it to Soviet citizens travelling abroad.

Oleg Mozhaikov, head of the bank's currency department, said Gosbank was scrapping its tourist rate of exchange from Monday.

While two other Gosbank rates — official and commercial — will remain in force, the move meant at least a partial freeing of the ruble and a significant concession to market forces.

Inflation has steadily eroded the value of the ruble in recent months, while the currency has continued to pour from the printing presses to plug a state budget deficit estimated at 200 billion rubles this year.

The artificial official exchange rate, used for accounting purposes, stands at 0.57 rubles to the dollar. The commercial exchange rate, used for foreign trade, is 1.71 rubles per dollar.

Mr. Gerashchenko said Gosbank held some 4.5 billion rubles (\$7.9 billion at the official rate) on Nov. 16 for the purpose of budget payments.

Expenses for the two weeks since then were some eight to 10 billion rubles (\$14.0 to 17.5 billion).

On the other hand, he said, some income was still flowing into the union budget, albeit with major irregularities. He gave no further figures.

Many of the rebellious Soviet republics, including Russia, are heavily in arrears on budget payments.

Mr. Gerashchenko said he understood republican leaders would meet Sunday to discuss the "sad situation" with the budget.

Meanwhile, Russian central bank chairman Gecorgi Matjukhin said Friday that the Russian republic was on the brink of hyperinflation.

"Inflation is high, very close to the standards of... hyperinflation," he told a financial conference in the Netherlands.

Russian plans to liberalise prices this winter will force "very sharp and very rapid" price rises, Mr. Matjukhin said.

Hyperinflation is rapidly rising and self-fuelling inflation that can cause economic collapse.

Mr. Matjukhin said some economists define it as an inflation rate of more than 50 per cent a month.

"Fortunately I suppose that our rate is a little bit lower," he said, but precise figures were not available.

Economists have speculated that inflation in the Soviet Union may be running at 200 per cent a year and that prices of basic goods could rise in Russia by up to four-fold once freed.

Mr. Matjukhin warned that any Soviet republic introducing its own currency without consulting others first would face serious consequences. Ukraine has threatened to launch its own money.

"If it is done suddenly and unilaterally without consultations, then we shall have to react strongly. I mean that we will be obliged to stop any payments between the republic and Russia," he said, without elaborating.

Russia wants to create a banking union with other republics based on the use of a common currency.

Free trade brings five fold rise in Yemeni fish prices

ADEN, Yemen (R) — Free trade and a market economy are costing consumers dear in Aden, once the capital of the Arab World's only Marxist state.

The price of fish, an important source of protein in the port city of 500,000, has jumped about fivefold since the two Yemens merged in May 1990 and Marxism was abandoned.

Local traders blame unlicensed merchants they say are exporting the fish by air to neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

The people of Aden have asked the mayor, Mahmoud Arrasi, to intervene to stop exports and bring prices down.

Throughout 18 years of Marxism the state controlled the fish market and prices never rose above 750 fils (\$1.5) a kilogramme.

Now the fish are sold by auction and one kilogramme can fetch three to four dinars (\$6 to \$8).

The weekly newspaper Al Ayyam quoted fish merchants as saying "unlicensed people come to the auction and, in an unprecedented way, bid higher prices for any quantity offered."

The merchants at first said they were taking the fish to the northern cities but, reminded that prices there were lower, they admitted the fish were exported to Saudi Arabia, it added.

Traders say a Saudi merchant in the Eastern Province of Hadramaut has bought up the catch of all fishermen working for the province's cooperative society.

Under a deal with the cooperative, the merchant has given it a \$600,000 loan to buy new fishing boats, they added.

'Beg or work' says Zambian president

LUSAKA (R) — Zambia's new president Fredrick Chiluba, opening the first parliament under multi-party rule in two decades, said Friday the country's economy was in ruins.

"We are in a very grave situation. In the limited time available we have at last managed to shine a torch in the cupboard of state. Regrettably, I must inform you that the cupboard is bare. Even the crumbs are few," he told the house. "Our economy is in ruins and even the ruins are in danger."

Mr. Chiluba's government took office on Nov. 1 after veteran president Kenneth Kaunda was defeated in a general election.

Mr. Kaunda's opponents have accused him of ruining Zambia's economy, once healthy from copper exports and agriculture, through mismanagement and government corruption during his 27 years of rule since independence from Britain in 1964.

Under Mr. Kaunda's one-party rule introduced in 1973, the government controlled over 80 per cent of the economy and effectively blocked both foreign and local investment.

Now, Mr. Chiluba said, per capita debt was close to \$1,000 and inflation was over 100 per cent.

Mr. Chiluba, former head of the Zambian Confederation of Trade Unions, said his government was "committed to a pragmatic reconstruction programme" to create jobs and generate income.

"A way has to be found to earn foreign exchange and reduce debt, or we risk forever being banished to the dark dungeons of international disrepute and perpetual internal decline," he said. "Zambians have two choices. We may beg, or we may work."

He said the donor community had a role in helping the country's economy to pick up but pleaded with them not to be too harsh with Zambia.

"Do not kill the patient with an overdose now. A little at a time may be more beneficial," he said.

He said his government's economic programme would seek to promote the private sector, target incentives for export promotion and local and foreign investment and remove barriers to foreign trade and investment.

An agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank was imminent, he said. Teams from both institutions are in the country to work on an economic programme.

Mr. Chiluba said the agricultural sector would receive special attention to include an overhaul of the marketing system.

"The former agricultural policy was incompetent bordering on the insane," he said.

Malaysian natural rubber output falls

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — Malaysia, one of the world's top producers and exporters of natural rubber, produced only 927,640 tonnes of the commodity in this year's first nine months, down two per cent from January-September last year, the government has said.

The Statistics Department said September production of 115,686 tonnes was down three per cent from August, but up 0.5 per cent from September last year. Exports during the first nine months dropped 14 per cent from year-earlier levels to 859,373 tonnes, it said. September exports fell to 97,814 tonnes from 109,605 tonnes in August and 118,268 tonnes in September 1990. Main buyers of Malaysian rubber in January-September were South Korea with 122,821 tonnes; the United States, 92,433 tonnes; Japan, 78,297 tonnes; Singapore, 63,118 tonnes; Germany, 55,241 tonnes; Italy, 49,179 tonnes and Britain, 46,997 tonnes.

Most Japanese do not feel affluent

TOKYO (R) — Japan's standard of living has improved with its strong economic performance but poor housing and infrastructure keep most Japanese from feeling affluent, the government's Economic Planning Agency (EPA) has said.

The EPA's annual white paper on Japanese living standards said unreasonably high land prices were an example of how Japan's economic growth had failed to benefit the average person.

Such problems were particularly acute in Tokyo, as many companies and people had concentrated in the capital in the economic boom, it said.

As a result, land prices made it hard to buy houses in Tokyo and workers were forced to live in remote areas and use crowded commuter trains, it said.

Church denounces rising tide of corruption in Brazil

BRASILIA, Brazil (R) — Brazil's influential Roman Catholic church issued a scathing attack Friday on what it described as growing corruption and denounced the "scandalously high salaries" of officials and businessmen.

In a declaration on the state of the nation, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops lamented growing poverty, hunger, unemployment and misery among the country's 150 million people but added:

"This situation is aggravated by corruption, which is stretching out further and further, destroying society's sense of the common good. The customary complicity and impunity favour the corrupt and stimulate violence in the city and in the countryside."

Asked what evidence the church had for this statement, Monsignor Dom Celso Queiroz, general secretary of the bishops conference, told a news conference: "You only have to look at around you. The newspapers are full of it."

President Fernando Collor de Mello's government, which swept to power promising to clean up government and stem abuses, has been engulfed by an avalanche of press and opposition denunciations of corruption.

"There are so many cases of corruption in Brazil today," said Paulo Pontes, archbishop of Sao Luis de Maranhao in Brazil's struggling north-east. "We want to make a special point of emphasising that the current crisis has a special nature. It is not just political or economic. It is ethical."

A typical example of the corruption allegations was aired Thursday night by the normally pro-government Globo Television channel.

Globo said congressman Alberto Goldman had asked the federal accounts tribunal to look into why the health ministry had agreed to pay 18.1 billion cruzeros (about \$21 million) to a now-existent company to supervise another company which was supervising a government school building programme.

The government said it had suspended payments to the firm while the tribunal's investigation was being carried out.

Deputies in the state assemblies of Brazil's impoverished north-east, where thousands are starving, currently earn up to \$11,000 a month and receive lavish perks including chauffeur driven cars and hefty expense accounts.

The bishops conference, the ruling council of the Brazilian Catholic Church, also appealed to Brazilians to pursue a dialogue of national unity urgently.

Unions, employees, politicians, the church and other representative organisations had to be brought together to avoid social and economic disaster.

The church, the bishops added, had a special duty to "unmask the workshop of money and of a lifestyle based on the accumulation of riches and, at times, exhibitionism and waste, which is all the more scandalous in the face of the hunger and misery of millions of Brazilians."

Official report warns of soaring industrial production in China

PEKING (AP) — China's soaring output of often unmarketable goods poses a threat to an economy staggering under the weight of heavily indebted state enterprises and unwanted inventories, an official report has warned.

The China Daily also reported an estimate that China's budget deficit for 1991 was likely to reach 60 billion yuan (\$11.1 billion), and that its trade deficit continues to grow every month.

An economist warned that uncontrolled industrial growth could overwhelm the central government if it rises above 15 per cent, the China Daily said. It said industrial output in the first 10 months of this year was 13.9 per cent higher than the same period last year.

The government has spent heavily making up its enterprises' debts. It ordered each province recently to shut down 10 failing state-owned businesses, signaling that it was running out of resources to bail them out.

State-run enterprises continue churning out shoddy goods that are shunned by consumers, building up stockpiles of unsold goods and driving the businesses deep into debt.

"The fact that industrial production has sustained high growth rates should merit highly serious attention," said a statement from the Statistics Bureau.

Previously, bureau spokesman Zhang Zhongji said he expected the annual rate of industrial growth to be around 14 per cent of this year, the newspaper said.

Government figures show that industrial production in October was 14.3 per cent higher than October 1990, the newspaper said. It said the value of industrial production in October was 204.5 billion yuan (\$38.2 billion), but gave no figure for October 1990.

Mr. Zhang said that in the first nine months of this year, the value of stockpiled goods totalled 200 billion yuan (\$37.7 billion), an increase of 30 billion yuan (\$5.6 billion) over the same period last year.

The newspaper said China faces increasing problems because of "a tight budget, bulging stockpiles and debts among these enterprises."

The number of state-owned companies in trouble has increased dramatically since 1988. Yet officials have been reluctant to close them, fearing that large numbers of idled workers could lead to social unrest.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times
in co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	Rate 29/11/91	Rate 27/11/91
Sterling Pound	1.7677	1.7655
Deutsche Mark	1.6235	1.6145
Swiss Franc	1.4340	1.4260
French Franc	5.5505	5.5135
Japanese Yen	129.95	129.89
European Currency Unit	1.2555	1.2521

European Interest Rates

3 MTHS 6 MTHS 12 MTHS

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.00	4.87	4.75	4.57
Sterling Pound	10.56	10.50	10.45	10.45
Deutsche Mark	9.57	9.37	9.37	9.37
Swiss Franc	8.06	8.12	7.95	7.87
French Franc	9.68	9.62	9.62	9.50
Japanese Yen	6.28	6.06	5.81	5.62
European Currency Unit	10.31	10.21	10.21	10.12

Precious Metals

30/11/91

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	367.70	0.90	Silver	4.08	0.09

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

30/11/91

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6610	0.6630
Sterling Pound	1.2050	1.2090
Deutsche Mark	0.4185	0.4206
Swiss Franc	0.4745	0.4767
French Franc	0.1226	0.1232
Japanese Yen	0.5235	0.5261
Dutch Guilder	0.3718	0.3737
Swedish Krona	0.1141	0.1147
Italian Lira	0.0556	0.0559
Belgian Franc	0.02034	0.02044

Other Currencies

30/11/91

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7770	1.7860
Lebanese Lira	0.077210	0.77680
Saudi Riyal	0.1813	0.1820
Kuwaiti Dinar	—	—
Qatari Riyal	0.1846	0.1852
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2150
Omani Riyal	1.7430	1.7520
UAE Dirham	0.1646	0.1652
Greek Drachma	0.3641	0.3722
Cypriot Pound	1.4675	1.4820

CAB Indices for Amman Financial Market

20/11/91 27/11/91

Index	20/11/91	27/11/91
All-Share	124.66	125.14
Banking Sector	104.91	104.91
Insurance Sector	125.95	127.09
Industry Sector	154.10	155.18
Services Sector	137.25	138.45

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Gorbachev warns of territorial disputes if Ukraine separates

MOSCOW (R) — Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in an interview published Saturday, urged the Ukraine to remain within the Soviet Union and revived the suggestion that Russia could claim some of the vast republic's territory.

Mr. Gorbachev's interview with Soviet News Agency (TASS) and a newspaper in Byelorussia appeared on the eve of Ukraine's independence referendum expected to be held in a wide margin.

All six candidates in the Ukraine's presidential election, being held concurrently, appealed for a large vote in favour of independence in a live television debate Friday.

But Mr. Gorbachev, trying to stitch together a new treaty linking the 12 Soviet republics, said the election campaign was distorting the key issue — that the Ukraine's prosperity depended on remaining within a renewed union.

"I am for the self-determination within the union," he said. "We are already beginning to understand that somehow we kept putting things off and now we have to maintain our mutual action or face a break-up which would cost us dearly."

Mr. Gorbachev, who has said he cannot envisage a new union without Ukrainian participation, said the idea of independence was

"being exploited with electoral or perhaps other aims in mind which could spill over into territorial disputes."

"Let's not forget that Kharkov was joined to the Ukraine by the Bolsheviks to gain a majority in the Soviet Union and that the Crimea is long linked to Russian history," he said.

Mr. Gorbachev also stressed the need to protect the rights of non-indigenous minorities, saying that in some areas they were made to feel like second-class citizens. Eleven million of the Ukraine's 53 million people are ethnic Russians.

The oblique threat that the Russian federation could lay claim to large chunks of territory in the Ukraine was first unleashed by one of Russian President Boris Yeltsin's aides just after last August's failed coup.

The suggestion that areas inhabited mainly by ethnic Russians — the industrial Donbass area and the Crimea — could be reclaimed if the republic claimed independence sent shock waves through the Ukrainian leadership.

The same mistrust of "Russian chauvinism" occurred in Kazakhstan, also home to large numbers of ethnic Russians.

A mission to both republics by Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi appeared to have put an end to the matter, but the

issue has clearly remained below the surface.

The drive for independence in the Ukraine, linked to Russia for a millennium, has taken Kremlin leaders by surprise, with Moscow only recently appearing to take the matter seriously.

Mr. Gorbachev repeated his contention this week that the Ukraine would eventually join the new union treaty.

He offended the republic's leaders by suggesting that ordinary Ukrainians disagreed with them and wanted to be part of a new union.

Mr. Yeltsin said Friday that both his republic and the Soviet Union as a whole would be dealt a heavy blow if the Ukraine pressed ahead with separation.

Mr. Gorbachev said Soviet Prime Minister Ivan Silayev would meet prime ministers of republics Monday to proceed with reforms to ease the transfer to a market-oriented economy.

In Washington, President George Bush said Friday there would be no major break with Mr. Gorbachev over the Ukraine despite plans to embrace the republic's expected independence vote.

Mr. Gorbachev expressed concern Thursday about news reports suggesting that Mr. Bush was prepared to recognise the Ukraine if it votes for independence, as expected, in Sunday's

ballot.

"There's not going to be a big breach here," Mr. Bush told reporters when asked about his Ukraine policy and Mr. Gorbachev's reaction while Christmas shopping in nearby Maryland.

While he had not talked recently to Mr. Gorbachev, Mr. Bush said "there's more understanding" between himself and the Soviet president than news stories indicate.

Some media reports emphasised a statement by a senior U.S. official who said after the vote the United States would move "expeditiously" towards recognition of Ukrainian independence.

But the full quote showed the official saying: "We will move expeditiously but carefully."

An administration official told Reuters Friday the expected shift in U.S. policy "doesn't mean there's going to be instant recognition or anything like that."

Granting full diplomatic recognition is expected to evolve gradually, depending on how Kiev resolves concerns over human rights, control of nuclear arms stationed in Ukraine and the status of weapons treaties agreed to by Moscow, especially the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty signed a year ago.

Meanwhile, the six candidates competing to be the Ukraine's first directly-elected president have put aside political differences and appealed to voters to say "yes" to independence in a referendum Sunday.

The six, taking part in a live television debate Friday night, urged voters to back the idea of full independence by a wide margin. The debate climaxed the campaign for the presidential election also taking place Sunday.

"Only as an independent state can the Ukraine become a prosperous country," said Levko Lukyanenko, leader of the Nationalist Republican Party, who spent 27 years in Soviet prisons and labour camps for political activities.

Front-runner Leonid Karvchuk, chairman of the Ukrainian parliament, also appealed for support in the referendum called to confirm an independence proclamation by parliament on Aug. 24.



Indonesian team visits sight of Timor shooting

DILI, East Timor (R) — An Indonesian commission investigating the army shooting of mourners in East Timor on Nov. 12 visited the bullet-scarred cemetery Saturday to try to reconstruct the events that led to international criticism of Jakarta.

"We wanted to see the place where it happened," said Mr. Djaelani, the dapper and soft-spoken Supreme Court judge who is heading the government enquiry into the shootings.

Accounts by witnesses and the army vary widely over what happened at the Christian cemetery in the East Timor capital of Dili, and on Friday local governor Marior Viegas Carrascalao added his voice to those doubting the official death toll of 19.

Some reports put the toll as high as 180 and several witnesses say the shooting was not provoked, as the army claims, and that troops fired for up to 20 minutes into the crowd of 3,500 mourners.

Djaelani, who denied his own military background would influence the commission's findings, said he planned to spend the day scouring the area around the Santa Cruz Cemetery.

He and the six other members of the commission strolled past neat rows of crosses to the chapel where the firing was reported to have been concentrated.

They gazed at chapel walls now washed clean of blood, and walked on the grave of Sebastian Gomes, a young separatist whose death two weeks earlier the crowd had been mourning.

A gleaming white cross, red rose petals round its base, adorned the grave, near which blood-stained clothes, school books and shoes lay in heaps until one day after the shooting.

Earlier in the day the commission visited Motel Church where its Roman Catholic priest, Father Ricardo, pointed out to Mr. Djaelani the spot where Mr. Gomes fell dead on Oct. 28 during a clash between supporters and opponents of Indonesia's 16-year rule in this former Portuguese colony.

"I'm more or less satisfied," Mr. Ricardo said when asked how his three-hour meeting with the commission had gone.



Bush draws throngs on Christmas shopping expedition

WASHINGTON (R) — President George Bush joined millions of other Americans Friday in an annual ritual that is crucial to the U.S. economy — he began his Christmas shopping. Mr. Bush and his wife Barbara travelled from their presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland to a nearby shopping centre where they searched for gifts for their grandchildren. Mr. Bush was greeted with shrieks of delight from other shoppers. The president signed autographs, shook dozens of hands and generally created pandemonium. The outing put Mr. Bush in touch with several hundred regular middle-class Americans, and if they are blaming him for the country's economic downturn, they didn't show it. "Give the Democrats hell" shouted one shopper to the obviously delighted Republican president as he shopped at the J.C. Penney department store at Frederick Town Mall. It was doubtless a morale booster for the president, whose approval rating in opinion polls has fallen to about 50 per cent from a historic high of 90 per cent during the Gulf war early this year.

U.N. body expresses concern at human rights situation in Burma

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The General Assembly's Social Committee has adopted without a vote a resolution expressing concern at "information on the grave human rights situation" in Burma and stressing the need for rapid improvement.

The resolution's preamble specifically mentioned by name this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest since July 1989 and welcomed repeated calls by the U.N. secretary-general for her early release.

Her National League for Democracy won a landslide victory in a May 1990 general election but the results were ignored by the junta ruling Burma, also known as Myanmar.

Although in resolution was fairly mild and was further softened before being approved, it was the first one dealing with the human rights situation in Burma to be adopted by the Assembly's Social Committee.

The resolution, which now goes to the assembly plenary for endorsement, takes note of assurances by the Burmese government that it will take firm steps towards the establishment of a democratic state and looks forward to the early implementation of this commitment.

The resolution, initiated by Sweden, also expresses "concern at the information on the grave human rights situation and stresses the need for an early improvement of this situation."

It urges the Burmese government "to allow all citizens to participate freely in the political process in accordance with the principles of the universal declaration of human rights."

An expression of concern at "the continued deprivation of liberty of a number of democratically elected political leaders" was omitted from this paragraph during private negotiations.

According to a member of the Swedish delegation, this prompted most members of the European Community to withdraw their sponsorship, although the last-minute adherence of a number of additional countries meant the resolution was sponsored by more than 30 delegations.

Attack on Osijek mars ceasefire in Yugoslavia

BELGRADE (R) — The Yugoslav army was reported by Croatian media to have pounded the town of Osijek Saturday, killing at least four people and marring a shaky ceasefire on the eve of a peace mission by United Nations envoy Cyrus Vance.

Croatian television said the Serbian-led federal army fired artillery, tank shells and rockets on the frontline Croatian town close to the border with the rival republic of Serbia and hit a vegetable market.

Doctors said two people were killed in the market place and the television showed damaged buildings and wrecked cars. They said two others were killed when a shell hit a bus but did not confirm a Croatian radio report that a total of 10 were killed.

"Osijek is surrounded from three sides," Croatian television reporter Dragan Drajsica said. "They want to scare people. They want to destroy people."

The attack, which was not immediately confirmed by media in the rival Republic of Serbia, punctured a ceasefire that has brought a lull in five months of fighting in many other battlefields in the breakaway Republic of Croatia.

Croatian radio also reported fighting on the villages of Belisce and Valpovo northwest of Osijek, the town of Podravska Slatina northeast of the Croatian capital Zagreb, and the central towns of Pakrac and Nova Gradiska.

Serbian media did not immediately report the battles but the Belgrade-based news agency, Tanjug, said its office was slightly damaged in Zagreb Friday night. No-one was hurt.

Tanjug said the army is now only responding to attacks by Croatian forces.

The U.N.-brokered ceasefire came into force on Nov. 24. thirteen other truces failed to end the bloodshed which has killed thousands of people since Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in June and its Serbian minority rebelled.

The success of the news truce is a key condition for the U.N. to send a peacekeeping force to Yugoslavia.

Mr. Vance, a former U.S. secretary of state, arrives Sunday to try to forge an agreement between Croatia, Serbia and the federal army on the role of peacekeepers.

Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis confirmed Friday that he and his German counterpart Hans-Dietrich Genscher were the targets of an alleged assassination plot by Serbian guerrillas.

Asked about a report by Thursday's Berlin newspaper BZ that he and Mr. Genscher had been marked for death in retaliation for outspoken support for the Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia, De Michelis told reporters:

"Of course it's true. We've known it for weeks. We were told by our (secret) services which have relations with Germany's."

Italy and Germany have been at the forefront of European Community states seeking diplomatic recognition for the rebel Yugoslav republics.

OAS chief criticises Haiti. call for new elections

CARTAGENA, Colombia (R) — The head of the Organisation of American States (OAS) Friday criticised a decision by Haiti's military-backed government to call elections to replace ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

He said the OAS had adopted two resolutions calling for the return of Mr. Aristide, overthrown in a military coup on Sept. 30 months after being elected with a big majority.

A government which emerged from the current de facto regime would not be recognised, Mr. Baena Soares said.

He said he hoped the election call by provisional Prime Minister Jean-Jacques Honorat would not create a situation which hindered negotiations on the Haiti crisis.

Boeing 747 struck by lightning

ISLAMABAD (R) — A British Airways Boeing 747 was struck by lightning and damaged as it came into land at the Pakistani capital, an airline spokesman said Saturday. Nobody was hurt in the incident Friday but the left wing and the aircraft's electronic system were damaged. "The pilot skillfully managed to land the plane in safety," the spokesman said. The return flight to Britain was delayed by 24 hours because spare parts had to be flown from Saudi Arabia.

Togo troops obey president, quit all but radio station

LOME (R) — Togolese soldiers seeking to oust Prime Minister Joseph Kokou Koffigoh said Saturday they would obey President Gnassingbe Eyadema and withdraw from most strategic points in the capital.

"We have pulled out of all strategic points of the capital except the radio station," the armed forces said in a communique read by an army officer on Togolese radio and monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

But the soldiers said they were still calling for the dissolution of the High Council of the Republic (HCR), a transitional governing assembly appointed after a national conference on democratic reform.

The soldiers took over the radio and television stations and encircled the prime minister's office after the HCR banned Mr. Eyadema's former ruling party, the Rally of the Togolese People (RPT).

The three-day military power play was the closest yet that the army has come to reversing a democratic reform movement which this year effectively stripped Mr. Eyadema of most of his power after 24 years of authoritarian military rule.

Soldiers on previous occasions have occupied the radio and television and attempted to kidnap Mr. Koffigoh.

Diplomats and hospital sources said at least 25 people were killed in violence that for the most part pitted young pro-democracy demonstrators against members of Mr. Eyadema's Kabye tribe.

Mr. Koffigoh, appointed in August by the country's national conference, heads a transitional government which is intended to lead the tiny West African state to elections early next year.

The break in the coup attempt came after France sent some 300 troops to neighbouring Benin, where they were to await deployment in Togo to protect foreign nationals.

It also followed intense negotiations involving Mr. Eyadema, Mr. Koffigoh and the leaders of the army rebellion.

Mr. Eyadema in a communique read on Togo Radio Friday called on the soldiers to end their uprising and return to barracks.

The military leader said he was renewing his support for Mr. Koffigoh but called on the 43-year-old human rights lawyer to form a new government that would be more representative of the various political parties in Togo.

Togolese radio, monitored in nearby Ivory Coast, said the international airport in Lome, closed since Thursday, was back in business.

Duke's picture found to be Raphael

LONDON (R) — A "lost" painting by the 16th century master Raphael worth more than £20 million (\$36 million) has been found hanging on the wall of an English castle. Newspapers Saturday called the discovery of the work, the Madonna Dei Garofani, the art find of the century. The small work, which shows a Madonna and child toying with pink carnations, was found during a routine visit to the Duke of Northumberland's collection at Alnwick Castle in northeast England by experts of the National Gallery in London.

"The National Gallery is confident that it is a Raphael," the gallery's curator for high Renaissance art, Nicholas Penny, told the Times newspaper. It said infrared light testing had revealed Raphael as the artist. The painting, executed on a fruitwood panel, was long thought to be a copy of a lost original and had previously been believed to be worth about £100,000 (\$180,000). Newspapers said Sotheby's auction house now valued the work at between £20 million and £30 (\$36 million and \$54 million). "It is a horrible 19th century frame and was under dirty glass. It is wonderful, sublime and in perfect condition," Julien Stock, Sotheby's old master expert, said. The work will be lent to the National Gallery from next February.

British children think Germans are warmongers

LONDON (R) — British children remain hooked on stereotype images of Germans as warmongers nearly 50 years after the end of World War II, according to a new study. "The war dominated. It's quite clear that children think of Germany as the place which began two world wars and that it might happen again," researcher Cedric Cullington said. "Hitler is the one German that they have all heard of."

Mr. Cullington, head of primary education at Brighton Polytechnic in southern England, interviewed 100 children aged six to nine for his study. He blamed television programmes and comic strips for perpetuating the negative image of Germans and other stereotypes and said misconceptions should be corrected in schools. "In spite of all the debate about Europe, there is no idea among children of what a country is like," Mr. Cullington said. Asked what they knew about France, many of the children said it was the country where "people eat snails."

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Actor Ralph Bellamy dies at 87

LOS ANGELES (R) — Ralph Bellamy, the eternal supporting star of more than 100 films who said he made a living out of being rejected by leading ladies, died Friday at the age of 87, a hospital spokeswoman said. Bellamy, whose career stretched over 60 years, died at St John's Hospital of a long illness. The tall, softly-spoken Bellamy was also a major stage actor, best remembered for his triumphal portrayal of President Franklin Roosevelt in the Broadway hit and film version of *Sunrise at Campobello*. Bellamy, a successful businessman off screen, had been in the hospital several times this year for treatment for what was described as a serious respiratory infection. Bellamy, who received an honorary Academy Award in 1987 for his film performances, seldom stopped working and in the 1980s appeared with Don Ameche in *Trading Places*, which starred Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd. "It is not a bad career, being the guy the leading lady turns down," he once said of his life in films.

Tokyo police rescue kidnap victim

TOKYO (R) — Police stormed a Tokyo apartment Saturday to rescue a Japanese bank employee held handcuffed and blindfolded since Tuesday by kidnappers demanding 300 million yen (\$2.3 million) from his scandal-tainted bank, police said. No one was reported harmed in the saga in which as many as 2,500 Tokyo police were mobilised. It ended when the hostage, 37-year-old Yasutaro Taka, was taken to hospital on a stretcher still wearing a blindfold. The media agreed to a news blackout until the case was resolved. To maintain secrecy, Ms. Taka's two children, an eight-year-old boy and six-year-old girl, were told their father was on a business trip. They found out about the ordeal only when it was reported on television, Kyodo News Service said. The drama began Tuesday evening when Taka, who works at the giant Fuji Bank's computer centre in Tokyo, was abducted on his way home from work.

15 die as dust storm hits California

FRESNO, California (R) — At least 15 people were killed and more than 100 injured in a series of highway crashes caused by a blinding California dust storm, a U.S. official said Saturday. "It looks like a war zone," Fresno County Sheriff's Lieutenant Donald Burk said of wreckage from Friday's pileups which involved about 250 vehicles on an interstate highway south east of San Francisco. High winds in the Central Valley, a rich agricultural region, whipped up dust storms from fields left barren at the end of the harvest season. Visibility on the road was zero. Most of the deaths occurred on a short stretch of the highway near the town of Coalinga, about 250 kilometres south east of San Francisco. Vehicles, including about a dozen articulated lorries, piled into one another. Lt. Burk said the confirmed death toll early Saturday stood at 15 and of those injured nearly two dozen were critical. "There's a strong possibility the toll will go higher," he said. "Some of the remains in the vehicles are so badly burned they don't even look like people."

Major cholera epidemic feared in Rio

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — A rapid-fire spread of cholera through the shantytowns slums of Rio de Janeiro could strike up to 200,000 people and kill some 2,000, fearful health officials said Friday. The city's first known cholera victim, a soldier who caught it in the Amazon jungle, is doing well. But officials fear he may have spread the disease — which has raged through South America — to others in the Rio shantytown where he lives. "The possibilities of an epidemic here are great," city Health Secretary Ronaldo Gazolito told reporters. A man who travelled with the soldier is believed to be in Rio. But authorities cannot find him and he could be a carrier of cholera without any symptoms, Mr. Gazolito said. Health official Dr. Mari Baran noted that 1.5 million people in Rio de Janeiro state "live in inadequate conditions" where cholera could easily spread.

Albania to bring forward election

TIRANA (R) — Albania's caretaker government has agreed to hold general elections within three months and vowed to speed up economic reforms to help the shortage-stricken country through the winter.

The decision to bring forward the polls originally set for May or June was taken Friday night, four days after the opposition Democratic Party threatened to quit the government unless the majority former Communists agreed to early elections and purge old-style apparatchiks from power.

The Democratic Party had insisted that the elections should be held before Feb. 23 but no date has yet been set.

"The actual situation, and the need for constructing an active and efficient democratic state, condition the holding of untimely new elections to the people's Assembly earlier than the May-June 1992 period," the Albanian News Agency (ATA) said.

"They should be held as soon as the most indispensable economic and juridical conditions are created."

Albania, emerging from decades of isolation imposed by late Stalinist leader Enver Hoxha, held its first multi-party elections in March 1991.

The Communists, now renamed Socialists, swept to victory over the inexperienced Democratic and Republican parties.

But an all-Socialist government was forced to resign last June in the face of a nationwide general strike and a caretaker coalition government was formed.

The government said it would do its best to implement promised economic and land reform before the elections to see the country through the hard winter ahead.

Albania's shop shelves are stripped of basic goods and hospitals and factories, suffering chronic shortages of the most basic supplies, can barely function.

The country's trade unions Saturday said that life in Albania had reached a "crucial point" and urged the government to grant higher wages to cope with price rises already introduced as part of market reforms.

Khmer Rouge proposes council meet in rebel areas

BANGKOK (R) — The Khmer Rouge, whose leaders were beaten up and sent packing from the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh earlier this week, proposed Saturday that the country's provisional National Council should meet in guerrilla territory.

The Communist organisation pledged to provide security for all members of the Supreme National Council (SNC), which brings together the Phnom Penh government and three guerrilla factions under a United Nations peace accord.

The government meanwhile accused the Khmer Rouge of launching attacks in the Cambodian countryside in violation of a ceasefire since the accord was signed in Paris in October.

The Khmer Rouge, in a letter to Cambodia's newly-acknowledged head of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk, said the council should meet in the guerrilla-held town of Pailin sometime after next week's emergency session in Thailand.

Pailin, about 25 kilometres from the Thai border, is the only town of any size in guerrilla hands. Its surrounding gem mines have filled the Khmer Rouge's war chest, with hundreds of Thai miners flocking across the border and paying huge fees for digging concessions.

A Reuters correspondent who visited Pailin a few months ago said the town was ruined and deserted except for guerrillas and their families.

The Khmer Rouge proposal, broadcast on clandestine radio monitored in Bangkok, pledged "to ensure full security for all SNC members and representatives of other countries who took part in the meeting, and provide accommodation and food to everyone."

It appeared highly unlikely the Phnom Penh government would accept the offer.

Khmer Rouge President Khieu Samphan was beaten by an angry crowd and his villa ransacked Wednesday only hours after he returned to the city for the first time since the group's brutal 1975-79 rule.

His assailants: bayed for revenge for relatives who perished under the fanatical Communist government, which was driven into the jungle by a Vietnamese invasion and re-emerged to fight the Phnom Penh government.

The SNC was supposed to have its first meeting on Cambodian soil next week but the venue has now been switched to Pattaya, Thailand, following the ignominious flight of Mr. Khieu Samphan, defence chief Son Sen and their delegation.

In a letter to U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar Mr. Khieu Samphan said the incident seriously threatened the peace agreement, which would collapse if the council was unable to function properly because of lack of security.

But the Khmer Rouge have also expressed their commitment to making the accord work and want to try to return to Phnom Penh once more.

The pact is aimed at ending more than a decade of war between the Vietnamese-installed government and the three-party guerrilla alliance, which has splintered since the accord was signed.

A big U.N. peacekeeping force is to be deployed until elections are held in early 1993 while in the meantime the SNC would embody national sovereignty under the chairmanship of Prince Sihanouk, the former king, ruler and guerrilla leader.

So far only a small vanguard of peacekeepers is in place. French and Australian soldiers have withdrawn from the Western town of Battambang, where they were fixing up communications, in case of an outbreak of fighting sparked by Wednesday's fracas.

China holds Phnom Penh authorities responsible for the mob attack on leaders of the Khmer Rouge, the official People's Daily said Saturday.

A long commentary in the newspaper was the strongest statement Peking has made about responsibility for the attacks on

Mr. Khieu Samphan and Mr. Son Sen.

"It was by no means accidental and the Phnom Penh side can in no way shift its responsibility for the incident," a lengthy commentary said.

China was the main supplier of weapons to the Communist Khmer Rouge during the Cambodian civil war, and gave shelter to Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who now heads the SNC.

Peking is now forging close links with Phnom Penh Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The commentary said Phnom Penh must ensure the safety of all members of the SNC.

"As the SNC headquarters is located in Phnom Penh, people have all the more reason to demand that the Phnom Penh side guarantee their normal work free from any disturbances," the commentary said.

Peace in Cambodia depended on the participation of all members of the SNC.

"The Cambodian issue cannot possibly be settled, nor can peace and stability be maintained so long as one side of Cambodia is excluded in the settlement," the commentary said.

It called on the coalition members to "give up their old grudges," and work together to rebuild Cambodia.

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